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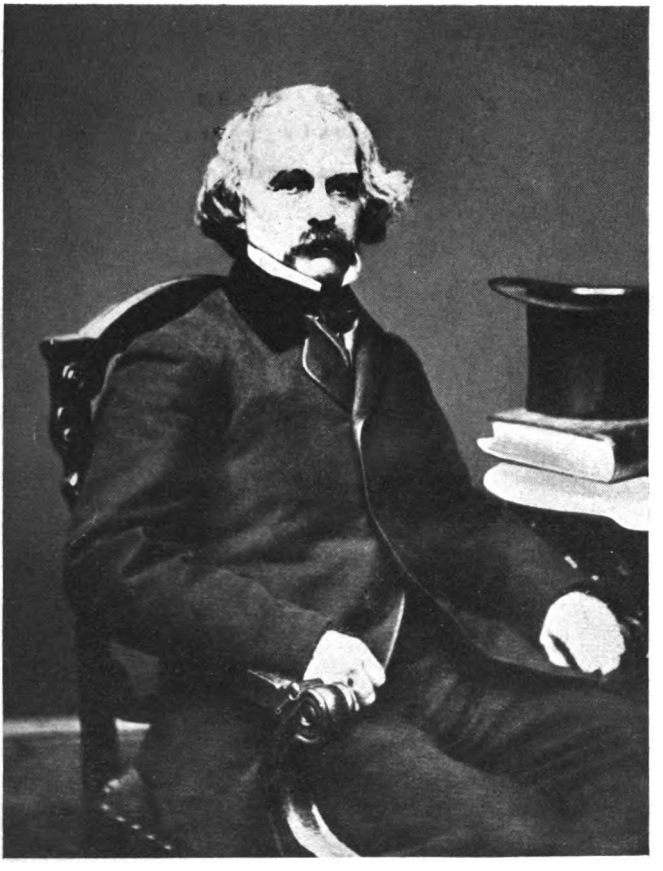

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

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Nathaniel Hawthorne

HOW TO KNOW HIM

By

GEORGE EDWARD WOODBERRY

Author of

America in Literature, The Torch
Life of Edgar Allan Poe,
etc., etc.

With Portrait

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HAWTHORNE

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HAWTHORNE

CHAPTER I

OLD NEW ENGLAND

WHAT is more characteristic of old New England than a snow-storm? Whittier's "Snow-Bound" is an epitome of the old home life. Emerson's "Snow Storm"—

"Announced by all the trumpets of the sky"—

although bad meteorology, gives truly the wind-sculpture of the day after, out-of-doors, with its soft farm-contours on "stake, or tree, or door," on "coop or kennel," in the brilliant air. They mix an exquisite homeliness with the wintry beauty, both true to the soil. Hawthorne, in "Snow-Flakes," a slight sketch, describes the approach of the storm, as mere weather, with a loving and minute care that makes it a real overture to winter. The scene is atmospheric, and the air bites. This is old New England on a December day:

"There is snow in yonder cold gray sky of the morning!—and, through the partially frosted win-

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dow panes, I love to watch the gradual beginning of the storm. A few feathery flakes are scattered widely through the air, and hover downward with uncertain flight, now almost alighting on the earth, now whirled again aloft into remote regions of the atmosphere. These are not the big flakes, heavy with moisture, which melt as they touch the ground, and are portentous of a soaking rain. It is to be, in good earnest, a wintry storm. The two or three people visible on the sidewalks have an aspect of endurance, a blue-nosed, frosty fortitude, which is evidently assumed in anticipation of a comfortless and blustering day. By nightfall, or at least before the sun sheds another glimmering smile upon us, the street and our little garden will be heaped with mountain snow-drifts. The soil, already frozen for weeks past, is prepared to sustain whatever burden may be laid upon it; and, to a northern eye, the landscape will lose its melancholy bleakness and acquire a beauty of its own, when Mother Earth, like her children, shall have put on the fleecy garb of her winter's wear. The cloud spirits are slowly weaving her white mantle. As yet, indeed, there is barely a rime like hoarfrost over the brown surface of the street; the withered grass of the grass-plat is still discernible; and the slated roofs of the houses do but begin to look gray instead of black. All the snow that has yet fallen within the circumference of my view, were it heaped up together, would hardly equal the hillock of a grave."

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There is a snow-bound leisure in the very style!

A more fixed feature of ancestral New England, with which Hawthorne, boy and man, was familiar, is the fishing village on the coast. He knew the region, also, far and wide in the interior, both by residence and random bits of travel; but his birth and home were by the sea, and he had sea-blood from his fathers. His employment, too, in middle life, brought him in close contact with seafaring men. The touch of salt was not uncommon then, in New England blood. Longfellow had it; and how happily the sea slips like a tide into his verse!

"I remember the black wharves and the slips,
And the sea-tides tossing free;
And the Spanish sailors with bearded lips,
And the beauty and mystery of the ships,
And the magic of the sea."

Longfellow looked like a sailor, in cheek, eye and build. Hawthorne, in the long tramps he was accustomed to take by the rocky ledges of the shore and upon the broad stretches of shining beach, must have felt the call of the blood. All the paraphernalia of the sea interested him; and its human figures held his eye, alike by their reality and their picturesqueness. Consider this sketch of the coast village:

"It was a small collection of dwellings that seemed to have been cast up by the sea, with the rockweed and marine plants that it vomits after a

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storm, or to have come ashore among the pipe staves and other lumber which had been washed from the deck of an eastern schooner. There was just space for the narrow and sandy street, between the beach in front and a precipitous hill that lifted its rocky forehead in the rear, among a waste of juniper bushes and the wild growth of a broken pasture. The village was picturesque in the variety of its edifices, though all were rude. Here stood a little old hovel, built perhaps of driftwood; there a row of boat-houses; and beyond them a two-story dwelling, of dark and weather-beaten aspect, the whole intermixed with one or two snug cottages, painted white, a sufficiency of pigsties, and a shoemaker's shop. Two grocery stores stood opposite each other, in the center of the village. These were the places of resort, at their idle hours, of a hardy throng of fishermen, in red baize shirts, oilcloth trousers, and boots of brown leather covering the whole leg; true seven-league boots, but fitter to wade the ocean than walk the earth. The wearers seemed amphibious, as if they did but creep out of salt water to sun themselves; nor would it have been wonderful to see their lower limbs covered with clusters of little shellfish, such as cling to rocks and old ship timber over which the tide ebbs and flows."

And hearken to "Uncle Parker," as he sits "yarning" in the village store:

"His figure is before me now, enthroned upon a

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mackerel barrel, a lean old man, of great height, but bent with years and twisted into an uncouth shape by seven broken limbs; furrowed also, and weather-worn, as if every gale, for the better part of a century, had caught him somewhere on the sea. He looked like a harbinger of tempest; a shipmate of the Flying Dutchman. After innumerable voyages aboard men-of-war and merchant-men, fishing schooners and chebacco boats, the old salt had become master of a handcart, which he daily trundled about the vicinity, and sometimes blew his fish-horn through the streets of Salem. One of Uncle Parker's eyes had been blown out with gunpowder, and the other did but glimmer in its socket. Turning it upward as he spoke, it was his delight to tell of cruises against the French, and battles with his own shipmates, when he and an antagonist used to be seated astride of a sailor's chest, each fastened down by a spike nail through his trousers, and there to fight it out. Sometimes he expatiated on the delicious flavor of the hagden, a greasy and goose-like fowl, which the sailors catch with hook and line on the Grand Banks. He dwelt with rapture on an interminable winter at the Isle of Sables, where he had gladdened himself, amid polar snows, with the rum and sugar saved from the wreck of a West India schooner. And wrathfully did he shake his fist, as he related how a party of Cape Cod men had robbed him and his companions of their lawful spoil, and sailed away with every keg of old Jamaica, leaving him not a drop to drown his sorrow. Villains they

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were, and of that wicked brotherhood who are said to tie lanterns to horses' tails, to mislead the mariner along the dangerous shores of the Cape."

When it comes the imaginary narrator's turn to take the old "uncle's" place, he tells of the marvelous sailors of a former age: "If the young men boast their knowledge of the ledges and sunken rocks, I speak of pilots who knew the wind by its scent and the wave by its taste, and could have steered blindfold to any port between Boston and Mount Desert, guided only by the rote of the shore,—the peculiar sound of the surf on each island, beach, and line of rocks along the coast." This is the same pen that, at a riper period of life and experience, wrote reminiscences of ships' cabins at Boston and sea-captains' talk at Liverpool, and drew those too-faithful and yet-unforgotten portraits of the worthies of the Salem Custom House.

Hawthorne delighted in these local pen-drawings. He was a born observer; and this faculty of minute observation, with the attendant power to reproduce the scene in words, was perhaps the first literary discovery he made in the matter of his talent. He was an inveterate journalizer. "Keeping a diary" was a habit of old New England, and, though Hawthorne called the thing a "note-book," he must have produced endless reams of such writing. This daily exercise—it seems to have been practically that—sharpened and fixed his habit of observation; and,

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perhaps, it encouraged an indiscriminate attention to small matters. What he jotted in one of these note-books was apt to turn up afterward in a sketch or tale. It was out of such observation and annotation that his early local sketches grew—scenes of the Salem streets, landscapes from a steeple, figures in a railway station, a day in a toll-house on the bridge, and the like. The look of old New England might be almost reconstructed out of these and similar passages in Hawthorne's work.

But it was not only the local aspect of his immediate vicinity that Hawthorne saw and recorded. Old New England was not merely a winter scene or a fishing village, nor even a whole county; it embraced a mode of life scattered over a wide district. Hawthorne had summered and wintered it in many parts besides Salem, his birthplace, and its surrounding country. He spent his boyhood at Sebago Lake, in Maine, in a region almost primitive; his college days were passed at Bowdoin; and, later, he knew some sort of vacation travels that took him to New Hampshire, Connecticut and Western Massachusetts, and apparently as far as Niagara. There are even whispers of Detroit, as a far-western terminal to his wayfaring. Those were the days of the stage-coach, with its abundant opportunity to see the world on a journey, and not merely to speed through it. There was a vagabond streak in Hawthorne at that age, a desire to wander, natural to his years. It seems to have been rather a slow fever, it is true; it

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did not take him far, except in his mind, perhaps; but it made him very sympathetic with the things of "the road." The nucleus of the story-telling faculty, from Chaucer's day, has often been a pilgrimage. Among Hawthorne's early plans in literature, that never worked out, was one to weave a chain of such vagabond tales by an itinerant story-teller and his companion. Such literary schemes in his mind derived both their material and their method from his little journeys in rural communities, where the freemasonry of the stage-coach and the tavern prevailed. The scenes and the characters of these excursions into the provincial world of New England, are often set forth in their raw state in his contemporary note-book, minutely and at length. These are very informal writings, with little intention in them, best described by their editor as "the results of an early formed taste for exercising his pen upon the simplest objects of notice that surrounded him." For this very reason they are almost a photographic rendering of New England.

The note-books, indeed, are so continuous and abundant that they constitute, taken together, a motion-picture, so to speak, of Hawthorne's environment from youth to age. The scene is more crowded with humanity, when he is abroad in the world; when he comes home again, nature comes to the foreground. The diary of his Concord days, after his marriage, illustrates this. It is a history of

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his farm. Its main interest may be said to be vegetables. This is his garden:

"The natural taste of man for the original Adam's occupation is fast developing itself in me. I find that I am a good deal interested in our garden, although, as it was planted before we came here, I do not feel the same affection for the plants that I should if the seed had been sown by my own hands. It is something like nursing and educating another person's children. Still, it was a very pleasant moment when I gathered the first string-beans, which were the earliest esculent that the garden contributed to our table. And I love to watch the successive development of each new vegetable, and mark its daily growth, which always affects me with surprise. It is as if something were being created under my own inspection, and partly by my own aid. One day, perchance, I look at my bean-vines, and see only the green leaves clambering up the poles; again, tomorrow, I give a second glance, and there are the delicate blossoms; and a third day, on a somewhat closer observation, I discover the tender young beans, hiding among the foliage. Then, each morning, I watch the swelling of the pods and calculate how soon they will be ready to yield their treasures. All this gives a pleasure and an ideality, hitherto unthought of, to the business of providing sustenance for my family. I suppose Adam felt it in Paradise;

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and, of merely and exclusively earthly enjoyments, there are few purer and more harmless to be experienced. Speaking of beans, by the way, they are a classical food, and their culture must have been the occupation of many ancient sages and heroes. Summer-squashes are a very pleasant vegetable to be acquainted with. They grow in the forms of urns and vases,—some shallow, others deeper, and all with a beautifully scalloped edge. Almost any squash in our garden might be copied by a sculptor, and would look lovely in marble, or in china; and, if I could afford it, I would have exact imitations of the real vegetable as portions of my dining-service. They would be very appropriate dishes for holding garden-vegetables. Besides the summer-squashes, we have the crook-necked winter-squash, which I always delight to look at, when it turns up its big rotundity to ripen in the autumn sun. Except a pumpkin, there is no vegetable production that imparts such an idea of warmth and comfort to the beholder. Our own crop, however, does not promise to be very abundant; for the leaves formed such a superfluous shade over the young blossoms, that most of them dropped off without producing the germ of fruit. Yesterday and to-day I have cut off an immense number of leaves, and have thus given the remaining blossoms a chance to profit by the air and sunshine; but the season is too far advanced, I am afraid, for the squashes to attain any great bulk, and grow yellow in the sun. We have

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muskmelons and watermelons, which promise to supply us with as many as we can eat. After all, the greatest interest of these vegetables does not seem to consist in their being articles of food. It is rather that we love to see something born into the world; and when a great squash or melon is produced, it is a large and tangible existence, which the imagination can seize hold of and rejoice in. I love, also, to see my own works contributing to the life and well-being of animate nature. It is pleasant to have the bees come and suck honey out of my squash-blossoms, though, when they have laden themselves, they fly away to some unknown hive, which will give me back nothing in return for what my garden has given them. But there is much more honey in the world, and so I am content. Indian corn, in the prime and glory of its verdure, is a very beautiful vegetable, both considered in the separate plant, and in a mass in a broad field, rustling and waving, and surging up and down in the breeze and sunshine of a summer afternoon. We have as many as fifty hills, I should think, which will give us an abundant supply. Pray Heaven that we may be able to eat it all! for it is not pleasant to think that anything which Nature has been at the pains to produce should be thrown away. But the hens will be glad of our superfluity, and so will the pigs, though we have neither hens nor pigs of our own. But hens we must certainly keep. There is something very sociable and quiet, and soothing, too, in their solilo-

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quies and converse among themselves; and, in an idle and half-meditative mood, it is very pleasant to watch a party of hens picking up their daily subsistence, with a gallant chanticleer in the midst of them. Milton had evidently contemplated such a picture with delight.

"I find that I have not given a very complete idea of our garden, although it certainly deserves an ample record in this chronicle, since my labors in it are the only present labors of my life. Besides what I have mentioned, we have cucumber-vines, which to-day yielded us the first cucumber of the season, a bed of beets, and another of carrots, and another of parsnips and turnips, none of which promise a very abundant harvest. In truth, the soil is worn out, and, moreover, received very little manure this season. Also, we have cabbages in superfluous abundance, inasmuch as we neither of us have the least affection for them; and it would be unreasonable to expect Sarah, the cook, to eat fifty head of cabbages. Tomatoes, too, we shall have by and by. At our first arrival, we found green peas ready for gathering, and these, instead of the string-beans, were the first offering of the garden to our board."

The mild vein of meditation slipping in between the squashes and the corn, in this extract, indicates that "sunthin' in the pastoral line," long native to the New England literary temperament, though it

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seldom crops out in recent years. Thoreau was its most distinguished prose prophet; but it covered all our pastures with a mist of sentiment. The mood clung about persons as well as products. There is an adjoining passage, in the diary, about Emerson and Margaret Fuller in the summer woods of Concord, near the Old Manse farm described above, which is a true Yankee idyl. Hawthorne is especially happy in his descriptions of the forest landscape and country atmosphere of his early Concord days. It was, indeed, an enchanted region; the eyes that looked on it had been touched by fairy herbs. Thoreau confounded Concord River with the Nile, and spoke slightingly of travel except in the Maine woods or on Cape Cod. Emerson, it must be owned, was a fellow conspirator with him in this advocacy of the parish.

It requires large minds and immense vistas to do away with perspectives and proportion, in this high Concord way. It is to forego the telescope for the microscope, as if minuteness of observation could compensate for the world's horizons. A certain pettiness creeps inevitably upon the daily page that records the habitual and the commonplace, no matter how truthfully. "Yesterday I found two mushrooms in the woods, probably of the preceding night's growth. Also I saw a mosquito, frost-pinched, and so wretched that I felt avenged for all the injuries which his tribe inflicted upon me last summer, and so did not molest this lone survivor.

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. . . I found a maple-leaf to-day, yellow all over, except its extremest point, which was bright scarlet. It looked as if a drop of blood were hanging from it." Hawthornesque remarks, truly. These things belong to the fecundity of universal nature, and the infinitesimal has a large share in that. Yet, even in trifles, Hawthorne never loses for long his vivid literary touch. "A gust of violets along a wood-path,"—that is the whole note; simple, elemental, like an eastern drawing. But such simplicity, applied to a whole summer and a countryside, requires the tolerance of a strolling mind. His own spirit was of a leisurely make. Small things easily absorbed his attention; they illustrate the nicety of his senses, and, often, the wings of his imagination; but, though it may seem a paradox to say so, this habit of small thinking points to an indolence in his mentality, as if it grew comatose in such lethargic surroundings as he found himself in from time to time.

But when he lifts his eyes from insect life, the pigsty and the kitchen-garden, how the winding Concord River comes into view, the grape-vine thickets by Brook Farm, Cow Island with its stately pines—"Somewhat like looking among the pillars of a church;" or, to quote once more his infinite panorama of the countryside, the "American autumn" emerges, drenched in sunlight, a tranquil scene worthy of his own romances!

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"I returned home by the high-road. On my right, separated from the road by a level field, perhaps fifty yards across, was a range of young forest-trees, dressed in their garb of autumnal glory. The sun shone directly upon them; and sunlight is like the breath of life to the pomp of autumn. In its absence, one doubts whether there be any truth in what poets have told about the splendor of an American autumn; but when this charm is added, one feels that the effect is beyond description. As I beheld it to-day, there was nothing dazzling; it was gentle and mild, though brilliant and diversified, and had a most quiet and pensive influence. And yet there were some trees that seemed really made of sunshine, and others were of a sunny red, and the whole picture was painted with but little relief of darksome hues,—only a few evergreens. But there was nothing inharmonious; and, on closer examination, it appeared that all the tints had a relationship among themselves. And this, I suppose, is the reason that, while nature seems to scatter them so carelessly, they still never shock the beholder by their contrasts, nor disturb, but only soothe. The brilliant scarlet and the brilliant yellow are different hues of the maple-leaves, and the first changes into the last. I saw one maple-tree, its center yellow as gold, set in a framework of red. The native poplars have different shades of green, verging towards yellow, and are very cheerful in the sunshine. Most

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of the oak-leaves have still the deep verdure of summer; but where a change has taken place, it is into a russet-red, warm, but sober. These colors, infinitely varied by the progress which different trees have made in their decay, constitute almost the whole glory of autumnal woods; but it is impossible to conceive how much is done with such scanty materials."

This is like a glass of Donatello's golden wine at Monte Beni.

As characteristic a scene of Hawthorne's old New England is this sketch in the heart of the city, at no less locally famous a rendezvous than the "Frog Pond" on Boston Common:

"One of my chief amusements is to see the boys sail their miniature vessels on the Frog Pond. There is a great variety of shipping owned among the young people, and they appear to have a considerable knowledge of the art of managing vessels. There is a full-rigged man-of-war, with, I believe, every spar, rope, and sail, that sometimes makes its appearance; and, when on a voyage across the pond, it so identically resembles a great ship, except in size, that it has the effect of a picture. All its motions,—its tossing up and down on the small waves, and its sinking and rising in a calm swell, its heeling to the breeze,—the whole effect, in short, is that of a real ship at sea; while, moreover, there is some-

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thing that kindles the imagination more than the reality would do. If we see a real, great ship, the mind grasps and possesses, within its real clutch, all that there is of it; while here the mimic ship is the representation of an ideal one, and so gives us a more imaginative pleasure."

The lesson as to the imagination is significant, and illustrates the nearness of Hawthorne's meditation or fancy or sentiment to any object his eye noted; reflection seems instantaneous with observation, and almost to coincide with it. Neither eye nor mind was less hospitable, it seems, to one thing than another.

But to bring to an end these extracts from many times and seasons and varieties of place, which show different aspects of Hawthorne's native world and the kind of interest he took in it, observe the vivid detail, both material and human, of this Dutch picture, as it were, of the old original Boston hostelry, renowned as "Parker's":

"I did not go out yesterday afternoon, but after tea I went to Parker's. The drinking and smoking shop is no bad place to see one kind of life. The front apartment is for drinking. The door opens into Court Square, and is denoted, usually, by some choice specimens of dainties exhibited in the windows, or hanging beside the door-post; as, for instance, a pair of canvas-back ducks, distinguishable

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by their delicately mottled feathers; an admirable cut of raw beefsteak; a ham, ready boiled, and with curious figures traced in spices on its outward fat; a half, or perchance the whole, of a large salmon, when in season; a bunch of partridges, etc., etc. A screen stands directly before the door, so as to conceal the interior from an outside barbarian. At the counter stand, at almost all hours,—certainly at all hours when I have chanced to observe,—tipplers, either taking a solitary glass, or treating all round, veteran topers, flashy young men, visitors from the country, the various petty officers connected with the law, whom the vicinity of the Court-House brings hither. Chiefly, they drink plain liquors, gin, brandy, or whiskey, sometimes a Tom and Jerry, a gin cocktail (which the bar-tender makes artistically, tossing it in a large parabola from one tumbler to another, until fit for drinking), a brandy-smash, and numerous other concoctions. All this toping goes forward with little or no apparent exhilaration of spirits; nor does this seem to be the object sought,—it being rather, I imagine, to create a titillation of the coats of the stomach and a general sense of invigoration, without affecting the brain. Very seldom does a man grow wild and unruly.

"The inner room is hung round with pictures and engravings of various kinds,—a painting of a premium ox, a lithograph of a Turk and of a Turkish lady, . . . and various showily engraved tailors' advertisements, and other shop-bills; among them

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all, a small painting of a drunken toper, sleeping on a bench beside the grog-shop,—a ragged, half-hatless, bloated, red-nosed, jolly, miserable-looking devil, very well done, and strangely suitable to the room in which it hangs. Round the walls are placed some half a dozen marble-topped tables, and a center-table in the midst; most of them strewn with theatrical and other show-bills; and the large theater-bills, with their type of gigantic solidity and blackness, hung against the walls. . . .

"Pacing the sidewalk in front of this grog-shop of Parker's (or sometimes, on cold and rainy days, taking his station inside), there is generally to be observed an elderly ragamuffin, in a dingy and battered hat, an old surtout, and a more than shabby general aspect; a thin face and red nose, a patch over one eye, and the other half drowned in moisture. He leans in a slightly stooping posture on a stick, forlorn and silent, addressing nobody, but fixing his one moist eye on you with a certain intentness. He is a man who has been in decent circumstances at some former period of his life, but, falling into decay (perhaps by dint of too frequent visits at Parker's bar), he now haunts about the place, as a ghost haunts the spot where he was murdered, 'to collect his rents,' as Parker says,—that is, to catch an occasional nine-pence from some charitable acquaintances, or a glass of liquor at the bar. The word 'ragamuffin,' which I have used above, does not accurately express the man, because there

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is a sort of shadow or delusion of respectability about him, and a sobriety too, and a kind of decency in his groggy and red-nosed destitution."

In this fresh print from life one recognizes at a glance "old Moodie," of *The Blithedale Romance,* on his native or adopted heath, the "saloon," where he was wont to "lurk." The absence of Moodie, at the moment when, in the romance, the author enters on the scene in search of him, gives an opportunity for a minute description of the saloon, which is an interesting example of how Hawthorne reworked his note-books in more elaborate composition for the press. That autumn foliage, just spread upon the page, is a vista from Blithedale, and could not have been far from "Eliot's pulpit," which is one of the high lights of the rural landscape in the story. In fact, the whole *Blithedale Romance* is embedded in contemporaneity to a degree not paralleled in any other of Hawthorne's works, and reproduces scenes from the life of the community in which he lived, that startle the memory by their vivid truth. Their veracity is that of a crude realism.

Blithedale is set in the midst of wood and pasture, and in the breath of agricultural toil. Its story enfolds episodes of quiet beauty and many sentimental delights; but, as to the life depicted, one closes the pages with a prevailing sense of the trivial and the meager, the anæmic, the dingy and the dull.

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It is intellectually mediocre, and at loose ends; and, to a degree unusual even in Hawthorne's art, it grows by agglomeration of scene and incident more than by inward development. It shares one great advantage of historical fiction, although it is not history, in that it is based on actual events and social characteristics that had a high interest at the time, and still retain a legendary charm of faded romance; and the opportunity it affords for presenting old New England life, though greatly narrowed by its reform atmosphere, makes it a true chronicle of the time, of permanent local value. It enshrines, as is well known, the economic and spiritual episode of Brook Farm, but rather as a romantic incident in the community than as a material fact. Brook Farm, however, is only the fountain and origin of the story, which wanders off into quiet dreary suburban places and sinks in mean surroundings.

The two poles of interest in the story are scenes from nature on the one hand, and, on the other, four romantic characters, obscurely made out as regards their relations to one another, Hollingsworth, Zenobia, Priscilla and Westervelt, who move in the contemporary New England environment in town and country; an environment specialized, however, by the socialistic reform atmosphere of those days, as it was illustrated at Brook Farm, and also by the "magnetic" or "mesmeric" interests of the hour.

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The place of nature in the romance is symbolized by "Eliot's pulpit," a rock in the forest, like a score of others in the country woods:

"The rock itself rose some twenty or thirty feet, a shattered granite bowlder, or heap of bowlders, with an irregular outline and many fissures, out of which sprang shrubs, bushes, and even trees; as if the scanty soil within those crevices were sweeter to their roots than any other earth. At the base of the pulpit, the broken bowlders inclined towards each other, so as to form a shallow cave, within which our little party had sometimes found protection from a summer shower. On the threshold, or just across it, grew a tuft of pale columbines, in their season, and violets, sad and shadowy recluses, such as Priscilla was when we first knew her; children of the sun, who had never seen their father, but dwelt among damp mosses, though not akin to them. At the summit, the rock was overshadowed by the canopy of a birch-tree which served as a sounding-board for the pulpit. Beneath this shade (with my eyes of sense half shut, and those of the imagination widely opened) I used to see the holy Apostle of the Indians, with the sunlight flickering down upon him through the leaves, and glorifying his figure as with the half-perceptible glow of a transfiguration.

"I the more minutely describe the rock, and this little Sabbath solitude, because Hollingsworth, at our solicitation, often ascended Eliot's pulpit, and

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not exactly preached, but talked to us, his few disciples, in a strain that rose and fell as naturally as the wind's breath among the leaves of the birch-tree. No other speech of man has ever moved me like some of those discourses. It seemed most pitiful—a positive calamity to the world—that a treasury of golden thoughts should thus be scattered, by the liberal handful, down among us three, when a thousand hearers might have been the richer for them; and Hollingsworth the richer, likewise, by the sympathy of multitudes. After speaking much or little, as might happen, he would descend from his gray pulpit, and generally fling himself at full length on the ground, face downward. Meanwhile, we talked around him on such topics as were suggested by the discourse."

The conclusion of the colloquies at the base of "Eliot's pulpit" was staged by the novelist at the village hall, or "lyceum hall," as it was often then called, an institution of those days, that ranked with the "chapel" of an earlier, or the "forum" of a later, time.

"The scene was one of those lyceum-halls, of which almost every village has now its own, dedicated to that sober and pallid, or rather drab-colored, mode of winter-evening entertainment, the lecture. Of late years, this has come strangely into vogue, when the natural tendency of things would

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seem to be to substitute lettered for oral methods of addressing the public. But, in halls like this, besides the winter course of lectures, there is a rich and varied series of other exhibitions. Hither comes the ventriloquist, with all his mysterious tongues; the thaumaturgist, too, with his miraculous transformations of plates, doves, and rings, his pancakes smoking in your hat, and his cellar of choice liquors represented in one small bottle. Here, also, the itinerant professor instructs separate classes of ladies and gentlemen in physiology, and demonstrates his lessons by the aid of real skeletons, and manikins in wax, from Paris. Here is to be heard the choir of Ethiopian melodists, and to be seen the diorama of Moscow or Bunker Hill, or the moving panorama of the Chinese wall. Here is displayed the museum of wax figures, illustrating the wide catholicism of earthly renown, by mixing up heroes and statesmen, the pope and the Mormon prophet, kings, queens, murderers, and beautiful ladies; every sort of person, in short, except authors, of whom I never beheld even the most famous done in wax. And here, in this many-purposed hall (unless the selectmen of the village chance to have more than their share of the Puritanism, which, however diversified with later patchwork, still gives its prevailing tint to New England character), here the company of strolling players sets up its little stage, and claims patronage for the legitimate drama.

"But, on the autumnal evening which I speak of,

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a number of printed handbills—stuck up in the bar-room, and on the sign-post of the hotel, and on the meeting-house porch, and distributed largely through the village—had promised the inhabitants an interview with that celebrated and hitherto inexplicable phenomenon, the Veiled Lady!

"The hall was fitted up with an amphitheatrical descent of seats towards a platform, on which stood a desk, two lights, a stool, and a capacious antique chair. The audience was of a generally decent and respectable character: old farmers, in their Sunday black coats, with shrewd, hard, sun-dried faces, and a cynical humor, oftener than any other expression, in their eyes; pretty girls, in many-colored attire; pretty young men,—the schoolmaster, the lawyer, or student at law, the shop-keeper,—all looking rather suburban than rural. In these days, there is absolutely no rusticity, except when the actual labor of the soil leaves its earth-mould on the person. There was likewise a considerable proportion of young and middle-aged women, many of them stern in feature, with marked foreheads, and a very definite line of eyebrow; a type of womanhood in which a bold intellectual development seems to be keeping pace with the progressive delicacy of the physical constitution. Of all these people I took note, at first, according to my custom. But I ceased to do so the moment that my eyes fell on an individual who sat two or three seats below me, immovable, apparently deep in thought, with his back, of course,

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towards me, and his face turned steadfastly upon the platform.

"After sitting awhile in contemplation of this person's familiar contour, I was irresistibly moved to step over the intervening benches, lay my hand on his shoulder, put my mouth close to his ear, and address him in a sepulchral, melodramatic whisper:—

"'Hollingsworth! where have you left Zenobia?' . . .

"The audience now began to be impatient; they signified their desire for the entertainment to commence by thump of sticks and stamp of boot-heels. Nor was it a great while longer before, in response to their call, there appeared a bearded personage in Oriental robes, looking like one of the enchanters of the Arabian Nights. He came upon the platform from a side door, saluted the spectators, not with a salaam, but a bow, took his station at the desk, and first blowing his nose with a white handkerchief, prepared to speak. The environment of the homely village hall, and the absence of many ingenious contrivances of stage-effect with which the exhibition had heretofore been set off, seemed to bring the artifice of this character more openly upon the surface. No sooner did I behold the bearded enchanter, than, laying my hand again on Hollingsworth's shoulder, I whispered in his ear,—

"'Do you know him?'

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"'I never saw the man before,' he muttered, without turning his head.

"But I had seen him three times already. Once, on occasion of my first visit to the Veiled Lady; a second time, in the wood-path at Blithedale; and lastly, in Zenobia's drawing-room. It was Westervelt. A quick association of ideas made me shudder from head to foot; and again, like an evil spirit, bringing up reminiscences of a man's sins, I whispered a question in Hollingsworth's ear,—

"'What have you done with Priscilla?'

"He gave a convulsive start, as if I had thrust a knife into him, writhed himself round on his seat, glared fiercely into my eyes, but answered not a word.

"The Professor began his discourse, explanatory of the psychological phenomena, as he termed them, which it was his purpose to exhibit to the spectators. There remains no very distinct impression of it on my memory. It was eloquent, ingenious, plausible, with a delusive show of spirituality, yet really imbued throughout with a cold and dead materialism. I shivered, as at a current of chill air issuing out of a sepulchral vault, and bringing the smell of corruption along with it. He spoke of a new era that was dawning upon the world; an era that would link soul to soul, and the present life to what we call futurity, with a closeness that should finally convert both worlds into one great, mutually con-

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scious brotherhood. He described (in a strange, philosophical guise, with terms of art, as if it were a matter of chemical discovery) the agency by which this mighty result was to be effected; nor would it have surprised me, had he pretended to hold up a portion of his universally pervasive fluid, as he affirmed it to be, in a glass phial.

"At the close of his exordium, the Professor beckoned with his hand,—once, twice, thrice,—and a figure came gliding upon the platform, enveloped in a long veil of silvery whiteness. It fell about her like the texture of a summer cloud, with a kind of vagueness, so that the outline of the form beneath it could not be accurately discerned. But the movement of the Veiled Lady was graceful, free, and unembarrassed, like that of a person accustomed to be the spectacle of thousands; or, possibly, a blindfold prisoner within the sphere with which this dark earthly magician had surrounded her, she was wholly unconscious of being the central object to all those straining eyes.

"Pliant to his gesture (which had even an obsequious courtesy, but at the same time a remarkable decisiveness), the figure placed itself in the great chair. Sitting there, in such visible obscurity, it was, perhaps, as much like the actual presence of a disembodied spirit as anything that stage trickery could devise. The hushed breathing of the spectators proved how high-wrought were their anticipations of the wonders to be performed through

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the medium of this incomprehensible creature. I, too, was in breathless suspense, but with a far different presentiment of some strange event at hand.

"'You see before you the Veiled Lady,' said the bearded Professor, advancing to the verge of the platform. 'By the agency of which I have just spoken, she is at this moment in communion with the spiritual world. That silvery veil is, in one sense, an enchantment, having been dipped, as it were, and essentially imbued, through the potency of my art, with the fluid medium of spirits. Slight and ethereal as it seems, the limitations of time and space have no existence within its folds. This hall —these hundreds of faces, encompassing her within so narrow an amphitheatre—are of thinner substance, in her view, than the airiest vapor that the clouds are made of. She beholds the Absolute!'

"As preliminary to other and far more wonderful psychological experiments, the exhibitor suggested that some of his auditors should endeavor to make the Veiled Lady sensible of their presence by such methods—provided only no touch were laid upon her person—as they might deem best adapted to that end. Accordingly, several deep-lunged countryfellows, who looked as if they might have blown the apparition away with a breath, ascended the platform. Mutually encouraging one another, they shouted so close to her ear that the veil stirred like a wreath of vanishing mist; they smote upon the floor with bludgeons; they perpetrated so hideous

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a clamor, that methought it might have reached, at least, a little way into the eternal sphere. Finally, with the assent of the Professor, they laid hold of the great chair, and were startled, apparently, to find it soar upward, as if lighter than the air through which it rose. But the Veiled Lady remained seated and motionless, with a composure that was hardly less than awful, because implying so immeasurable a distance betwixt her and these rude persecutors.

"'These efforts are wholly without avail,' observed the Professor, who had been looking on with an aspect of serene indifference. 'The roar of a battery of cannon would be inaudible to the Veiled Lady. And yet, were I to will it, sitting in this very hall, she could hear the desert wind sweeping over the sands as far off as Arabia; the icebergs grinding one against the other in the polar seas; the rustle of a leaf in an East-Indian forest; the lowest whispered breath of the bashfullest maiden in the world, uttering the first confession of her love. Nor does there exist the moral inducement, apart from my own behest, that could persuade her to lift the silvery veil, or arise out of that chair.'

"Greatly to the Professor's discomposure, however, just as he spoke these words, the Veiled Lady arose. There was a mysterious tremor that shook the magic veil. The spectators, it may be, imagined that she was about to take flight into that invisible sphere, and to the society of those purely spiritual

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beings with whom they reckoned her so near akin. Hollingsworth, a moment ago, had mounted the platform, and now stood gazing at the figure, with a sad intentness that brought the whole power of his great, stern, yet tender soul into his glance.

" 'Come,' said he, waving his hand towards her. 'You are safe!'

"She threw off the veil, and stood before that multitude of people pale, tremulous, shrinking, as if only then had she discovered that a thousand eyes were gazing at her. Poor maiden! How strangely had she been betrayed! Blazoned abroad as a wonder of the world, and performing what were adjudged as miracles,—in the faith of many, a seeress and a prophetess; in the harsher judgment of others, a mountebank,—she had kept, as I religiously believe, her virgin reserve and sanctity of soul throughout it all. Within that encircling veil, though an evil hand had flung it over her, there was as deep a seclusion as if this forsaken girl had, all the while, been sitting under the shadow of Eliot's pulpit, in the Blithedale woods, at the feet of him who now summoned her to the shelter of his arms. And the true heart-throb of a woman's affection was too powerful for the jugglery that had hitherto environed her. She uttered a shriek, and fled to Hollingsworth, like one escaping from her deadliest enemy, and was safe forever."

These various extracts illustrate the nature of the

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environment amid which Hawthorne was placed in his day and generation, and the raw material, both physical and social, upon which his genius began to work. It does not seem, at first sight, to be a rich soil for genius. It was a provincial life, set in natural magic, but, humanly, rather sad-colored, not to say drab. That is the impression that "Blithedale" gives; and "Blithedale" is all Hawthorne's genius could make of the contemporary scene of New England in its heyday of "reform." To a certain degree the reform element in the tale denaturalized New England. The vegetable garden at Concord and the fishing village are truer to type, as are the vignettes, soon to be noticed, of the church steeple, the toll-bridge, and the town pump. After all, the town pump is the characteristic topic of Hawthorne's early manner. It rightly occupied, for a season, the center of his stage. That was during the time of his hermit-like seclusion in his chamber at Salem, waiting for his hour to come and knock at his door. Provincial as was his environment in those early years of manhood, after he left college, his share in it was of the slightest. He had no contacts, apparently, with life, in the ordinary sense, except through sight. He had little, if any, touch of it. Perhaps this peculiar situation—this social isolation in a small community—sharpened his habits of observation; it certainly emphasized his brooding propensities; and it, doubtless, deepened the dark veins in his genius.

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It would, however, be taking far too narrow a view to seek the impress of New England on Hawthorne's genius merely in his description of the aspect of the soil, or in scenes from contemporary life, as he transferred them direct to his note-books, or in modified forms to his fiction. He drew more deeply from the springs of his birthplace, and his nature was more catholic in its response to life, more comprehensive of the various influences about him, with a greater diversity of gifts, than has been indicated. He was distinguished from the New England group in general by being more of the common human nature, not so specialized in culture or limited in taste and talent as was the fortune of one or another of them. Not so literary—not such a belle-lettrist—as Longfellow, nor so clergy-minded as Emerson—not so countrified as Thoreau, nor so homespun as Whittier, he was a more complete New Englander than any of them, more fully and variously representative of the soil and the people. It has required time to make this apparent; but as the whole period removes gradually, the very excess, as it sometimes seems, of contemporaneity in Hawthorne stamps him as the outstanding scribe of his age in its "form and feature" as it lived; and not merely realistically for the span of one generation or two, but he cast the spirit and the look of old New England in literature, as one might cast it in bronze, for its whole course—our forefathers and their land, from the little log-house church in the forest

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clearing to India wharf with its fleets, "wafted on some of their many courses by every breeze that blows."

Prolific in books as the later age is, there has been no better description of the New England land, —hill, field and forest,—than Hawthorne wrote down, none so sharply bitten in and at the same time comprehensive in its sweep, so true to atmosphere and faithful to the rich, native color under a brilliant sky; and to the land he added the rocky margin of his own coast, the inshore sea with its myriad life, and the solitude that spread its larger silence over the non-human world. Similarly, to the quiet but thriving activity of his own day he added the backward reach of history,—the colony; he made himself familiar with the books of his folk, the landmarks of their coming hither and their stay, the superstition that affrighted them in the wilderness, the freedom that sprang up on the new soil, more sound and wholesome than grain, the spirit of adventure that sent their ships through the world; and his genius, being thus instinct with the whole life of his people, delighted in the tale it told. If the story was crossed with black humors, they were native ones; if it showed meagerness of matter and deprivations of the spirit, they, too, were of the soil and the race. Hawthorne absorbed history from the land, as he had absorbed its natural look; and he went on from this secular understanding of New England to a spiritual understanding, striving

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to follow its dark and secret thought. This was the climax of his genius. His range, from first to last, was thus broadly inclusive.

What was, perhaps, fundamental in this slow and orderly unfolding of Hawthorne's genius was his brooding temper, his ability to see things long and repeatedly and to let them sink in, to think "long thoughts," like the boy in Longfellow's poem reminiscent of his own youth, and in general to be content with reverie and dream and meditation in lieu of more active pursuits. Though he shows little obvious influence of the sea in his works, except by the presence of such topics as any citizen of a seaport would naturally take up, one associates this brooding temper with the sea-strain in his heredity. He had sea-blood; and that, perhaps, told most in a certain moodiness and melancholy that underlay his genius and that was, unfortunately, favored and intensified by the mode of his life after leaving college and in the opening years of manhood. But, whatever its cause, meditation came natural to him, and hours of solitary thought and secret musing, indoors and outdoors as well; it was thus that his genius ripened in lonely places. This isolation gave him leisure and concentration, and he used them to appropriate New England's present and past, as they came into his view. The completeness with which he did this showed in the high sentiments of his historic imagination and in the human sympathy of his contemporary observations; but it was not in the

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picturesque adornment of his native history, nor in feeling sketches of life as he saw it, that he was to paint most intimately the spirit of New England.

He drew near, as it were in concentric circles, like a bird of prey, to the core of the New England mystery,—the sense of evil at the heart of life, sin and its ways with the soul. The penance of conscience that follows on acted sin, like an inward vengeance slowly spreading outward on the face of things, the working out of the ancient curse on the children to the third and fourth generation, the transformation wrought in the innocent by the knowledge of good and evil, such that it seems the very birth of the soul itself,—these were the topics that finally evolved the full force of his genius and the perfection of his art. The common ground of all these was his Puritan heredity; not that he set forth in his tales the doctrinal beliefs of the anterior age, but the true source of his interest in these themes was in his blood and breeding; they stand relieved against that antique history, and draw their imaginative substance and spiritual breath from that old "orthodoxy," as it came to be called. The earlier age, Jonathan Edwards and his virile race of the old clergy, had gone by; now from their dark thoughts and fervid experiences a moral heredity had been distilled, a moral imagination had been generated, and Hawthorne in his creations and meditations spoke for a special culture, markedly religious at bottom, diffused through his community,

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His creations were the fruit of his meditations. Thought was at their basis. More and more, as will be illustrated, an abstract element entered into his imagination. It is in the quality of this element that his New Englandism is most intense. The New Englanders were a thinking people, and both their thought about life and their experience of life were steeped in the old "orthodoxy," however much liberalism had made, here and there, rifts and pockets, as it were, in the common mass. Hawthorne represented this people, and, especially in his major works, their spiritual stamina and the dark air in which it throve. A deeper, but not unusual, shade belonged to his temperament, it may be, than was generally found; there may be some question as to the value of his insights, or the success, historically, of his portrayals; but there is no doubt as to the place and character of his main interest. That lay in the fortune of the soul under sin. Again and again, in the small and in the large, he set it forth. In this he most completely fulfilled his function, not merely of describing the land and displaying the chronicles of New England, but of being, by grace of the imagination, its true historian.

There is still another phase of his representative character in relation to his society. The mental manners and customs of New England at that day were marked and peculiar. The age, naturally, had an intellectual cut of its own, as well as a moral and religious habit. The common books of that

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time often seem very old-fashioned, not only by their pictures, but by the character of their sentiments and their fancies. It must be acknowledged that some of Hawthorne's early writings seem like lessons in an old New England reader; nor did his literary consanguinity with the times end there. The books of our fathers, like those of modern days, have their fates; but if one is able to recall, by chance, the magazine literature of that period, or, better still, the annuals, keepsakes and that order of compositions, the kind of blood-relationship that is here in mind will be plain. Jones Very, an admirable poet of Salem, if one should turn his pages, will give some sense of the moral atmosphere of the society with which Hawthorne was in contact. Best of all, perhaps, Sylvester Judd's once famous novel —famous, at least, in limited circles—*Margaret,* illustrates the imaginative quality of the period. It is in Hawthorne's pages that this vein is found in its permanency, a vein so subtle, so fine, so tenuous, at times, that its presence almost escapes the senses. There was a diaphanous quality in the New England imagination then, a delicacy of thought and feeling, native to that climate, which found expression in a "visionary sense." Hawthorne often so projected his dream as reverie; and in his firmest creative work something of this illusory feeling interleaves the pages. New England was then a place of imagination.

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In these various modes Hawthorne gathered into a focus of genius the life of New England,—its landscape, its annals, its superstitions and its faith, its fantasy and its dreaming ways.

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CHAPTER II

TALES OF AN ELDER DAY

HAWTHORNE was, preeminently, an observer and a moralist; or, to state it more broadly and justly, he was both artist and thinker, and with the progress of life, naturally, the mind counted for more than the eye. The objects of observation and meditation, which came within the scope of his interests in the juvenile years of his literary life and before his mind had concentrated and settled on its main bases of thought and tendency in mature manhood, were miscellaneous. In this earlier and extremely varied portion of the mass of his writings his genius is more experimental and discursive, with traits of youth; but for that very reason the continuous stream of short tales that came from his pen up to middle life discloses more plainly the nature of his mental growth. His journals show rich traces of a wandering mind as well as of a strolling habit; they are studded with what one can only call "fancies,"—ideas and suggestions to be worked out; and the miscellaneousness of these is only a degree greater than that of the tales themselves. His artistic creations, indeed, are the motions of a wandering mind. The stories, at times,

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reflect his interest in vagabondage and in oddities of character; they often reveal his liking for the picturesque, the processional, the formal speech of an older fiction, or give a pageant effect to the scenes presented; they are full of decorative instinct, of that half unconscious artistic feeling for the beautiful, the exquisite and the subtle, that denotes the artist born.

The final concentration of Hawthorne's mind upon moral themes, and his treatment of them by symbolical modes, was a very gradual process and seems to have been dependent on that maturity of the mind which comes with time. He would not have been a New Englander if he had not brooded on moral phenomena. But besides this fundamental predisposition of his intellectual interests, supported and reinforced by the temper of the community where he lived, his artistic attention was constantly caught and excited by any concrete sight or circumstance, any incident or tale or floating fancy, which had a moral meaning or which could be made to suggest one. He was first of all an observer; he was only secondarily a thinker, given to meditation; his mind worked originally in surfaces, images, fancies. The quality of thought that arises in imagination becomes philosophical and truly meditative only after the abstract element makes itself plainly apparent; in Hawthorne's case this involved the transformation of a physical image into a symbol. That was his artistic method of philosophizing.

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But the method was seldom, if ever, quite equal to the task. The result is a continual failure of the art to express the thought; the art falls silent; the thought ceases to appear. The natural motion of the artist, in such a case, is to fall back on the artistic element in his work, on the concrete, the definite, the vivid, and so to lose himself in material realities.

Hawthorne relinquished slowly the less imaginative elements in his work, such as historic and legendary fact and the contemporary actualities he observed and noted in his native city and its New England surroundings. Until the time of the novels, he was, in his tales, a thoroughly local New Englander; nor did he lose much of the flavor of the soil in either *The House of the Seven Gables* or *The Blithedale Romance,* while *The Scarlet Letter* merely removes his provincial guise and habit a few generations. He was, in fact, a contemporary of all his books, and wrote them, so to speak, from his own generation. He did not transcend his own time by any gift of education, sympathy or travel. It follows from this that he was substantially a man of his parish,—one might say an antiquary of his parish. The innumerable tales of the New England precinct, present and past, real and fanciful, by farmstead and woodland and seaside, of so many sorts and conditions of men, attest how profoundly and variously he was sympathetic with his own people, their history, and the soil. His

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genius, as it grew free in his greater works, did not detach him from his inheritance; it rather urged him, as he matured, into the ancient moral channels of his folk; but through all his development, with his growth in moral depth and artistic subtlety, in the knowledge and the means of truth, he held close to his New England nature, breeding and experience. Not so provincial as Whittier, not so "parochial" (to use James's word) as Thoreau, he was infinitely less the cosmopolite than Lowell, Irving or Longfellow. The word, cosmopolitan, indeed, hardly applies to the Americans of that age; as for Hawthorne, he was, first and last, the New Englander.

This is most plainly evident, as is natural, in those early writings where the sense of locality is most marked, the product of the duller years in the lonely chamber at Salem, of which he made so much mention, in the time when he waited long for fame to come to him. Realism of the most obvious and every-day kind played a large part in his compositions; they were, seemingly, condensations of what may have been his daily diary, things seen from his window or on his walks. Commonplace as these slight essays may have been in their day, and journalistic in the sense of having been written for the day's or the week's reading, and being often of the nature of small talk on humble topics, they have acquired with time an antiquarian value, like diaries of our grandfathers; they reproduce with fidelity

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the look, the mood, the concerns of that quiet, old-fashioned, early nineteenth-century countryside, and, besides, its intellectual and moral habit.

It is not the flow of life itself, but the mere aspect of things that is most recorded. The scene is usually of large horizons, of the day's events, or of the road. There is an order of time in these descriptions of what goes on from hour to hour for the eye to note in mundane surroundings and happenings; but, on the whole, it must be admitted that the little essays often seem chronicles of Lilliput. Spread out the earth and go up into a steeple to survey it, and you gain a certain unity of view, a panoramic sweep; but it is at the cost of nearness to the human world. Some such sense of distance from his kind pervades Hawthorne's local descriptions. He found a solitude about him wherever he looked. He takes his umbrella and goes out for a walk in the wet evening; he sees the mudhole at the corner and the flash of colored lights in the thoroughfare, the lovers falling into a puddle,—all there is to be seen, in fact, on a dark and stormy night; and then he goes back to be comfortable and alone in "the chamber" that he has left, this time, at least, only in fancy. Little journeys like this, he is fond of. They may take him only to the town pump, or they may take him as far as Nantucket; or perhaps he rambles with only the fancy of the bell-man's ding-dong, crying the lost, in his head. Be they far or near, matter of fact or matter of

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fancy, they are compact of realism,—gravestones, toy-shops, the menagerie, sugar-plums, organ-grinders, an endless medley. Now and then a scene as clear-cut and lively as a Bewick tail-piece occurs. Here is one, fresh from Salem's Asiatic trade:

"I see vessels unlading at the wharf, and precious merchandise strewn upon the ground, abundantly as at the bottom of the sea, that market whence no goods return, and where there is no captain nor supercargo to render an account of sales. Here, the clerks are diligent with their paper and pencils, and sailors ply the block and tackle that hang over the hold, accompanying their toil with cries, long drawn and roughly melodious, till the bales and puncheons ascend to upper air. At a little distance a group of gentlemen are assembled round the door of a warehouse. Grave seniors be they, and I would wager—if it were safe in these times to be responsible for any one—that the least eminent among them might vie with old Vicentio, that incomparable trafficker of Pisa. I can even select the wealthiest of the company. It is the elderly personage, in somewhat rusty black, with powdered hair, the superfluous whiteness of which is visible upon the cape of his coat. His twenty ships are wafted on some of their many courses by every breeze that blows, and his name—I will venture to say, though I know it not—is a familiar sound among the far separated merchants of Europe and the Indies."

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These vignettes of small scenes are innumerable in Hawthorne's local writings. They are even more brief, scarcely outline sketches, in those articles whose method of construction is simply a tying-up of infinite detail, such as the narrative of the incidents of the day at the toll-bridge. It was a famous bridge in those times, the old Essex bridge that led from Salem to Beverly across the river, where a broad arm of the sea made inland. On its timbers, he says, the travel of the north and east continually throbbed: and he details the nondescript procession of the road from the first fragrant load of hay before dawn to the noonday glare, the stoppage of traffic when the eastern schooner "sticks" in the draw, on till the gleam of the island lighthouse far seaward follows the sunset glow. The scene is a picture of an old New England seaside day.

"Here, in a substantial family chaise, setting forth betimes to take advantage of the dewy road, come a gentleman and his wife, with their rosy-cheeked little girl sitting gladsomely between them. The bottom of the chaise is heaped with multifarious band-boxes, and carpet-bags, and beneath the axle swings a leathern trunk, dusty with yesterday's journey. Next appears a four-wheeled carryall, peopled with a round half dozen of pretty girls, all drawn by a single horse, and driven by a single gentleman. Luckless wight, doomed, through a

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whole summer day, to be the butt of mirth and mischief among the frolicsome maidens! Bolt upright in a sulky rides a thin, sour-visaged man, who, as he pays his toll, hands the toll-gatherer a printed card to stick upon the wall. The vinegar-faced traveller proves to be a manufacturer of pickles. Now paces slowly from timber to timber a horseman clad in black, with a meditative brow, as of one who, whithersoever his steed might bear him, would still journey through a mist of brooding thought. He is a country preacher, going to labor at a protracted meeting. The next object passing townward is a butcher's cart, canopied with its arch of snow-white cotton. Behind comes a 'sauceman,' driving a wagon full of new potatoes, green ears of corn, beets, carrots, turnips, and summer squashes; and next, two wrinkled, withered, witch-looking old gossips, in an antediluvian chaise, drawn by a horse of former generations, and going to peddle out a lot of huckleberries. See there, a man trundling a wheelbarrow load of lobsters. And now a milk cart rattles briskly onward, covered with green canvas, and conveying the contributions of a whole herd of cows in large tin canisters.

. . . . . .

"The draw being lifted to permit the passage of a schooner, laden with wood from the eastern forests, she sticks immovably, right athwart the bridge! Meanwhile, on both sides of the chasm,

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a throng of impatient travellers fret and fume. Here are two sailors in a gig, with the top thrown back, both puffing cigars, and swearing all sorts of forecastle oaths; there, in a smart chaise, a dashingly dressed gentleman and a lady, he from a tailor's shopboard and she from a milliner's back room—the aristocrats of a summer afternoon. And what are the haughtiest of us but the ephemeral aristocrats of a summer's day? Here is a tin pedlar, whose glittering ware bedazzles all beholders, like a travelling meteor or opposition sun; and on the other side a seller of spruce beer, which brisk liquor is confined in several dozens of stone bottles. Here comes a party of ladies on horseback, in green riding habits, and gentleman attendant; and there a flock of sheep for the market, pattering over the bridge with a multitudinous clatter of their little hoofs. Here a Frenchman, with a hand organ on his shoulder; and there an itinerant Swiss jeweller.

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"Far westward now the reddening sun throws a broad sheet of splendor across the flood, and to the eyes of distant boatmen gleams brightly among the timbers of the bridge. Strollers come from the town to quaff the freshening breeze. One or two let down long lines, and haul up flapping flounders, or cunners, or small cod, or perhaps an eel. Others, and fair girls among them, with the flush of the

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hot day still on their cheeks, bend over the railing and watch the heaps of seaweed floating upward with the flowing tide. The horses now tramp heavily along the bridge, and wistfully bethink them of their stables. Rest, rest, thou weary world! for to-morrow's round of toil and pleasure will be as wearisome as to-day's has been; yet both shall bear thee onward a day's march of eternity. Now the old toll-gatherer looks seaward, and discerns the light-house kindling on a far island, and the stars, too, kindling in the sky, as if but a little way beyond; and mingling reveries of heaven with remembrances of earth, the whole procession of moral travellers, all the dusty pilgrimage which he has witnessed, seems like a flitting show of phantoms for his thoughtful soul to muse upon."

Through this busy day it is curious to observe how Hawthorne, just as in the wet evening, keeps the solitude of the spectator. It is as if these figures and objects passed in a mirror. Far deeper is the solitude in which he plunges himself by the sea-side. Photographic as are his impressions of land scenes, of the village street, the kitchen garden, the deep woods at Concord or the more open roadside country, it is the sea that he most absorbs into his spirit, and reproduces with the tones, almost, of nature herself. A thousand small scenes recur to the memory familiar with his deep-water pages. He does not tell of the blue sea itself, as the

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sailor knows it; he always views it from the land, as an ancient poet preferred, and thus it is coast-scenery he describes; but with what a pencil for minutiæ, for shadings and aspects! and with the frankness of a solitary, of one who does not fear to be overheard! and with what an intimacy with the object! His day by the seashore gathers up many days, no doubt. Did one ever find, except in boyhood, as many objects as he catalogues in one stroll? To review briefly his pleasures of "hours and hours," what a perfect description of beach birds is this! and how vivid is the sweep and thunder of the chasm, that follows!

"I made acquaintance with a flock of beach birds. These little citizens of the sea and air preceded me by about a stone's throw along the strand, seeking, I suppose, for food upon its margin. Yet, with a philosophy which mankind would do well to imitate, they drew a continual pleasure from their toil for a subsistence. The sea was each little bird's great playmate. They chased it downward as it swept back, and again ran up swiftly before the impending wave, which sometimes overtook them and bore them off their feet. But they floated as lightly as one of their own feathers on the breaking crest. In their airy flutterings they seemed to rest on the evanescent spray. Their images—long-legged little figures, with gray backs and snowy bosoms—were seen as distinctly as the realities in the mirror of the

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glistening strand. As I advanced they flew a score or two of yards, and, again alighting, recommenced their dalliance with the surf wave; and thus they bore me company along the beach, the types of pleasant fantasies, till, at its extremity, they took wing over the ocean and were gone.

. . . . . .

"Here is a narrow avenue, which might seem to have been hewn through the very heart of an enormous crag, affording passage for the rising sea to thunder back and forth, filling it with tumultuous foam, and then leaving its floor of black pebbles bare and glistening. In this chasm there was once an intersecting vein of softer stone, which the waves have gnawed away piecemeal, while the granite walls remain entire on either side. How sharply, and with what harsh clamor, does the sea rake back the pebbles, as it momentarily withdraws into its own depths! At intervals the floor of the chasm is left nearly dry; but anon, at the outlet, two or three great waves are seen struggling to get in at once; two hit the walls athwart, while one rushes straight through, and all three thunder as if with rage and triumph. They heap the chasm with a snow-drift of foam and spray. While watching this scene, I can never rid myself of the idea that a monster, endowed with life and fierce energy, is striving to burst his way through the narrow pass. And what a contrast, to look through the stormy

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chasm, and catch a glimpse of the calm bright sea beyond!"

Does it seem a mere waste of time to watch beach birds and great rollers, like this? As Hawthorne himself says on the next page,—"child's play becomes magnificent on so grand a scale." Let us write our names on the sand then!

"Draw the letters gigantic, so that two strides may barely measure them, and three for the long strokes! Cut deep that the record may be permanent! Statesmen and warriors and poets have spent their strength in no better cause than this. Is it accomplished? Return then in an hour or two and seek for this mighty record of a name. The sea will have swept over it, even as time rolls its effacing waves over the names of statesmen and warriors and poets. Hark, the surf wave laughs at you!"

But one can not follow the solitary through the infinite riches of his idleness. Even here a boat on the sea seems neighborly, or distant children playing on the sand; but, as man comes nigh, he flees to a deeper retreat, a recess so characteristic of his rocks, so intimate with his spirit in early manhood, that the passage may well seem a chronicle of autobiography:

"It is pleasant to gaze down from some high

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crag and watch a group of children gathering pebbles and pearly shell, and playing with the surf, as with old Ocean's hoary beard. Nor does it infringe upon my seclusion to see yonder boat at anchor off the shore, swinging dreamily to and fro, and rising and sinking with the alternate swell; while the crew—four gentlemen, in roundabout jackets—are busy with their fishing-lines. But, with an inward antipathy and a headlong flight, do I eschew the presence of any meditative stroller like myself, known by his pilgrim staff, his sauntering step, his shy demeanor, his observant yet abstracted eye. From such a man, as if another self had scared me, I scramble hastily over the rocks, and take refuge in a nook which many a secret hour has given me a right to call my own. I would do battle for it even with the churl that should produce the title deeds. Have not my musings melted into its rocky walls and sandy floor, and made them a portion of myself?

"It is a recess in the line of cliffs, walled round by a rough, high precipice, which almost encircles and shuts in a little space of sand. In front, the sea appears as between the pillars of a portal. In the rear, the precipice is broken and intermixed with earth, which gives nourishment not only to clinging and twining shrubs, but to trees, that gripe the rock with their naked roots, and seem to struggle hard for footing and for soil enough to live upon. These are fir-trees; but oaks hang their heavy branches

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from above, and throw down acorns on the beach, and shed their withering foliage upon the waves. At this autumnal season the precipice is decked with variegated splendor; trailing wreaths of scarlet flaunt from the summit downward; tufts of yellow-flowering shrubs, and rose-bushes, with their reddened leaves and glossy seed berries, sprout from each crevice; at every glance, I detect some new light or shade of beauty, all contrasting with the stern, gray rock. A rill of water trickles down the cliff and fills a little cistern near the base. I drain it at a draught, and find it fresh and pure. This recess shall be my dining hall. And what the feast? A few biscuits made savory by soaking them in sea-water, a tuft of samphire gathered from the beach, and an apple for the dessert. By this time the little rill has filled its reservoir again; and, as I quaff it, I thank God more heartily than for a civic banquet, that He gives me the healthful appetite to make a feast of bread and water.

"Dinner being over, I throw myself at length upon the sand, and, basking in the sunshine, let my mind disport itself at will. The walls of this my hermitage have no tongue to tell my follies, though I sometimes fancy that they have ears to hear them, and a soul to sympathize. There is a magic in this spot. Dreams haunt its precincts and flit around me in broad sunlight, nor require that sleep shall blindfold me to real objects ere these be visible. Here can I frame a story of two lovers, and make

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their shadows live before me and be mirrored in the tranquil water, as they tread along the sand, leaving no footprints. Here, should I will it, I can summon up a single shade, and be myself her lover. Yes, dreamer,—but your lonely heart will be the colder for such fancies. Sometimes, too, the Past comes back and finds me here, and in her train come faces which were gladsome when I knew them, yet seem not gladsome now. Would that my hiding-place were lonelier, so that the past might not find me! Get ye all gone, old friends, and let me listen to the murmur of the sea,—a melancholy voice, but less sad than yours. Of what mysteries is it telling? Of sunken ships and whereabouts they lie? Of islands afar and undiscovered, whose tawny children are unconscious of other islands and of continents, and deem the stars of heaven their nearest neighbors? Nothing of all this. What then? Has it talked for so many ages and meant nothing all the while? No; for those ages find utterance in the sea's unchanging voice, and warn the listener to withdraw his interest from mortal vicissitudes, and let the infinite idea of eternity pervade his soul. This is wisdom."

A vein of moralizing, it will be observed, slightly colors even the least of these wayside discourses, and variegates them like the sea-rocks so often under his feet. Now it is a streak of yellow or pink that steals on the drab and the gray,—some jocu-

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larity about girls' dresses, or a bit of old-fashioned sentiment; now it is of a soberer hue, shadows of mortality on the page; and not seldom it is black as the ebon rifts in the native granite of the sea cliffs, —the solid gloom of the ancient time. Though one accepts melancholy as an inseparable part of Hawthorne's genius, one wonders, at times, at his graveyard fancies. Apart, however, from the tomb, itself, which was prolific of thought and fancy, as well as of ghosts, in the age when he was born, there is an infusion of morality in his writings, more nearly akin to the sermonizing of the period than to its sepulchral sentiment. Those were days when the coarser terrors of life were vividly painted, in the interest of reform; but the terrors of thought, though they did not reach the ghastliness of the former age, were by no means forgotten, and came not far behind. The troop of sorrows that Gray, the poet of the country graveyard, was accustomed to marshal, still came at the literary call. They appeared in full costume when Hawthorne waved his wand, as, for example, in that description of a wakeful night which he calls "The Haunted Mind." The passage, though interesting for its New England phantasms, appeals most directly to the reader for the authentic view of the famous "chamber," with which it begins and ends, as with a snap-shot photograph:

"You peep through the half-drawn window cur-

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tain, and observe that the glass is ornamented with fanciful devices in frostwork, and that each pane presents something like a frozen dream. There will be time enough to trace out the analogy while waiting the summons to breakfast. Seen through the clear portion of the glass, where the silvery mountain peaks of the frost scenery do not ascend, the most conspicuous object is the steeple; the white spire of which directs you to the wintry lustre of the firmament. You may almost distinguish the figures on the clock that has just told the hour. Such a frosty sky, and the snow-covered roofs, and the long vista of the frozen street, all white, and the distant water hardened into rock, might make you shiver, even under four blankets and a woolen comforter. Yet look at that one glorious star! Its beams are distinguishable from all the rest, and actually cast the shadow of the casement on the bed, with a radiance of deeper hue than moonlight, though not so accurate an outline."

Now, the graveyard!

"You think how the dead are lying in their cold shrouds and narrow coffins, through the drear winter of the grave, and cannot persuade your fancy that they neither shrink nor shiver, when the snow is drifting over their little hillocks, and the bitter blast howls against the door of the tomb. That gloomy thought will collect a gloomy multitude, and throw its complexion over your wakeful hour."

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And now, the family of sighs!

"In the depths of every heart there is a tomb and a dungeon, though the lights, the music, and revelry above may cause us to forget their existence, and the buried ones, or prisoners, whom they hide. But sometimes, and oftenest at midnight, these dark receptacles are flung wide open. In an hour like this, when the mind has a passive sensibility, but no active strength; when the imagination is a mirror, imparting vividness to all ideas, without the power of selecting or controlling them; then pray that your griefs may slumber, and the brotherhood of remorse not break their chain. It is too late! A funeral train comes gliding by your bed, in which Passion and Feeling assume bodily shape, and things of the mind become dim spectres to the eye. There is your earliest Sorrow, a pale young mourner, wearing a sister's likeness to first love, sadly beautiful, with a hallowed sweetness in her melancholy features, and grace in the flow of her sable robe. Next appears a shade of ruined loveliness, with dust among her golden hair, and her bright garments all faded and defaced, stealing from your glance with drooping head, as fearful of reproach; she was your fondest Hope, but a delusive one; so call her Disappointment now. A sterner form succeeds, with a brow of wrinkles, a look and gesture of iron authority; there is no name for him unless it be Fatality, an emblem of the evil influence that rules

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your fortunes; a demon to whom you subjected yourself by some error at the outset of life, and were bound his slave forever, by once obeying him. See! those fiendish lineaments graven on the darkness, the writhed lip of scorn, the mockery of that living eye, the pointed finger, touching the sore place in your heart! Do you remember any act of enormous folly at which you would blush, even in the remotest cavern of the earth? Then recognize your Shame.

"Pass, wretched band! Well for the wakeful one, if, riotously miserable, a fiercer tribe do not surround him, the devils of a guilty heart, that holds its hell within itself. What if Remorse should assume the features of an injured friend? What if the fiend should come in woman's garments, with a pale beauty amid sin and desolation, and lie down by your side? What if he should stand at your bed's foot, in the likeness of a corpse, with a bloody stain upon the shroud? Sufficient, without such guilt, is this nightmare of the soul; this heavy, heavy sinking of the spirits; this wintry gloom about the heart; this indistinct horror of the mind, blending itself with the darkness of the chamber."

And now, once more, the chamber where "fame was won!"

"The slumbering embers on the hearth send forth a gleam which palely illuminates the whole outer

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room, and flickers through the door of the bedchamber, but cannot quite dispel its obscurity. Your eye searches for whatever may remind you of the living world. With eager minuteness you take note of the table near the fireplace, the book with an ivory knife between its leaves, the unfolded letter, the hat, and the fallen glove. Soon the flame vanishes, and with it the whole scene is gone, though its image remains an instant in your mind's eye, when darkness has swallowed the reality."

The darker shades of thought that occasionally fall on Hawthorne's reflective page are obvious here, and they sufficiently illustrate the diffusion through his earlier pieces of the Puritan heredity which he shared with the community, and which in his later years concentrated his meditative art on the touch and presence of evil in the soul. Equally temperamental in himself, and also of the times, was the delicacy of his spirit in creative work; the fragility—what may better be styled the insubstantiality—of his imaginative figures, the dreamlike atmosphere, the air of reverie, the omnipresence of fancy, are partly individualistic, especially in their degree, but they also have the "form and pressure" of the age; the airy phantasm was as frequent with him as the distempered dream. There is a striking contrast between the solid characters, shown with firm motion in the colonial tales—Puritans like Scott's Presbyterians—and this frailer breed of a

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later generation, both of life and literature. It is evident that, in his early years, the touch of history was to Hawthorne like the touch of earth to Antæus of old; it gave him life. In the first essays of his unassisted imagination, there was some uncertainty; his achievement was apt to be rather a vision than an illusion of reality. One should not press the point too much. The fashion of literature, like other fashions, passes away. It may be only a change of taste that is involved. The essential matter is to realize that Hawthorne was a man of his own time in his moods of imagination as well as in his dark Puritan humors.

This environment, the outward aspect of which has been fully illustrated, he reacted from by an extraordinary isolation; it threw him back sharply on his literary heredity for the nurture of his talents. He was a constant reader in those Salem years, and it naturally followed that the eighteenth century claimed him as a belated, that is, a colonial, child, and the early nineteenth impressed contemporary traces upon him. From the former he had that pellucid style, whose American flow began with Washington Irving and ceased with his own pen, and, to mention a detail, that mood of the graveyard, already noted, which, though deeply rooted in the Puritan temperament, had its literary memorial in Gray's "Elegy" and left its great American boulder in "Thanatopsis"; and he was allied to his own generation, it must be owned, by an occasional

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touch of sentimentality. Scott early taught him how to stage the theatrical tableau in an episode. Such marks of literary ancestry and of his time are easily to be discerned, as his work grows under his hand and year succeeds to year; and they are to be ascribed, in the main, to his studies, his readings, which occupied his mind more than "sights from a steeple" or walks by Marblehead rocks,—more, perhaps, than the "thousands upon thousands of visions" that he says he saw in his lonely chamber. A genius is, in part, the product of a thousand subtleties,—literary breeding, social environment, humanity pressing upon it in many ways; Hawthorne, in all his isolation, was not exempt from this moulding; but in its essence genius is original power, and obeys its own instincts.

Hawthorne's life in early manhood was thus uncommonly secluded. However thronged with phantoms of the mind, it was sterile in external experience. He describes it, himself, as a semi-vital existence. Nor was the case much bettered when he, at last, emerged from the Salem chamber into the dull and ordinary publicity of the business of the community. Whether he occupied himself as a "measurer" in the Boston Custom House, or spaded the "gold-mine," as he euphoniously styled the manure heap at Brook Farm, or collected his slim salary of two hundred and fifty dollars a year as "surveyor" in the custom-house at Salem, he was unable to be content with his part in the common

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lot. There was always, of course, the rigid line, dividing his existence into two lives, one humdrum with mortal tasks, and the other imaginative, meditative, spiritual. He never found vital air in "practical life"; as soon as he breathed that atmosphere, he began to be asphyxiated; "this earthly cavern where I am now buried," he writes of his Boston office, and, again, "my darksome dungeon . . . into which dismal region never comes any bird of paradise." On the other hand he never tires of minute observation, of day-dreaming, of moral analysis, and of recombining these mental elements in his life in imaginative creation in his tales. The activity of his mind throws into strong contrast, at times, the triviality of the matter on which it is employed. One grows more and more aware of the fineness of the mental quality, and also of the poverty of the matter of life involved. Here is a natural artist, one says,—sensibility, imagination, temperament,—but he starves.

Hawthorne was not indifferent to his surroundings nor impatient of them. He made the most of what his eyes saw, and of the suggestions that arose in his heart and imagination. He cultivated his experience, indeed, with great assiduity and economy. A necessity seemed laid upon him to set down in words the scenes and meditations that made up his day, as if a spell were upon him to make a record of what passed and only his pen would relieve the ever-present need of expression. The circle of ex-

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perience within which he worked was narrow; but it was minutely scanned, as if he would make up by scrutiny and penetration what there was lacking in extent. He slowly took possession of the object and completely absorbed it, whatever it might be; but, in the process of absorption, an artistic element was at work, a thing of selection and modification, of suggestion oftentimes, which gave a special character to the image or the thought, and made them Hawthornesque. This belonged to the artist in Hawthorne. It is true that the charm operated even on the trivial and meager, in daily life; its fascination, in some sort, is over all he wrote; but the spell was ever seeking a wider horizon, an atmosphere of greater freedom from the pressure of the actual, an ether of more delicate and secret life, in which to work its full power of magic and mystery. In a word, Hawthorne's genius, as it grew more and more aware of itself in its mastery of expression, though sensitive to its environment on every side, and, indeed, in a true sense its product, seems seeking to escape from it. His genius had, as it were, an instinct of escape, which slowly found a larger world. What really happened to Hawthorne, however, was that, as he grew, his mind became stored with the experiences of past generations and of other times, and his imagination operated on this new material. The fresh matter came in the shape of history or of local tradition; it was not purely imaginary, but it offered less resistance to the ar-

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tistic touch than did the matter-of-fact of the substantial environment in the scenes of the Salem countryside and the characters of the village. Habitually in the note-books, occasionally in the tales, and especially in the story of Blithedale, Hawthorne dealt with reality, as he saw it,—with the commonplace, the contemporary, and the usual, however it might be picked out with romantic color, now and then; but it was not in such work that his genius took wing. These passages, charming as they often are by virtue of some secret touch of glamour or of memory, give up their charm, in the main, only to a reader with a certain affection for New England. The true romancer—the magician —requires another and imaginary sphere. He found it slowly, and he did not always inhabit it; he did not, at the best, inhabit it altogether; and from time to time he "harked back," as the old saying was, to the "real" world and actual things. He made his first adventures in the imaginary world most notably by attempts to reconstruct colonial scenes, with a solid historical core, and history proved itself a good hand-maid to romance, as it has often done. The colonial tradition, in brief, was a main avenue of his escape from the environment in which he found himself in his youth. On what other scenes, indeed, should he exercise his imagination than those that formed his mental horizon,—the legendary "Sabbaths" of old Witch Lane, the sea-tragedies of Marblehead beaches, the historic episodes of Salem

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streets? For days he would sit, at Salem, in an alcove of the Athenæum library reading, with only one other person in another alcove. What sights would interest his "mind's eye" more, amid that solitude, than the stately figures of the former age at the old Province House, near by in Boston, or the ancient worthies of his own Puritan city in its early years; and who could set the mould for his imagination to display the panorama of sixty or a hundred years before with more certainty than the great "Author of Waverley"? When Hawthorne's eyes ceased to rest on the falling snow in the winter twilight, or on the tasks of the sea-beach or the common sights of the town-life, it was on the ancestral scenes of his own people that he most delighted to look in fancy, and it was with such a wand as Scott's that he summoned up the vision. In these episodes of "the times before," as they were depicted by his pen, both he and his subjects were at their best. It is true that in the humbler scenes from the days that had gone by there is a more delicate, if less obvious charm; but for boldness, power and concentration, what piece of historical imagination have our records finer than the tale of "Endicott and the Red Cross"? or, more impressive still because of its element of mystery, "The Gray Champion"? The story is of the New England, where American liberty began. It is a scene from a land of long ago; but it holds its colors well. It was long a popular tale.

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Stories of this sort find a true home in the people's heart. They are like the old tale of King Alfred and the cakes, that is almost the first glimpse of history that many of us ever had. They smell of antiquity, and give substance to a nation's whole past. In the nature of things there can not be many such, with so wide and so long an appeal to a nation's instincts. "The Gray Champion," however, has a number of less distinguished kindred among Hawthorne's imaginary revivals of colonial times. The series of the "Tales of the Province House" is the most brilliant group of these, both for romantic color and historical illusion. "Old Esther Dudley" is a dame no Bostonian of "the old race" ever forgets, and "Sweet Alice Vane" still has her gentle gallants, however unknown. Quite apart, too, from the local color and human attraction of such figures in the colonial drama, reminiscent of the gentlemen and fashions of buried time, there is, besides, in these legends that something Hawthornesque which discloses a temperament, and marks them as from an artist's hand. These sketches all transcend reality by their simplification; thence comes that impression they make of something elemental in them, which of itself proclaims them works of art. They bear traces of Hawthorne's genius, as a statue keeps the marks of the soil from which it has been dug. His personality has passed into the story created in his imagination. In a certain degree this is true also of his note-books, of his bor-

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rowings from his observations, and of the contemporary portrayals at Blithedale; but, broadly speaking, his genius makes a purer impress in proportion as he recedes from the actual in circumstance, character and event. In other words, his genius first found that larger world it sought, with entire freedom and opportunity to develop its power, by brooding over and dreaming in and recreating the colonial tradition which was the background of himself and the community in which he dwelt.

Hawthorne's genius, however idiosyncratic it may appear, will never be dissociated from his community; the two are revealed together. So complementary do they appear that it would seem, at some moments of reflection, that only by the light of that genius could the Puritan community, in a true sense, have been visibly set forth, and again that only that community could have been the proper medium to display his genius. The reality was seen through his temperament, and the two tended more and more to be fused in one union; but, in the earlier years, the communal element was more evident, in the avowedly historical sketches and local scenes, —portraits of places, rightly so-called, alike from their method and their theme; while the temperament of the writer counts for more, his individuality makes a larger contribution, in proportion as he passes from the general to the private life. In narrating the excursion of Goodman Brown into the Essex woods, in attendance on the witches' Sabbath,

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Hawthorne summons up the ghosts of the whole Satanic countryside of that far-off day, and all he accomplishes by it is to unsettle the Goodman's faith in the honesty and virtue of his neighbors; but the lesson implied as to the doubt of every-day appearances, is less prominent than the orgy of diabolism itself. How curiously lacking in imagination those orgies in the forest now seem to us, though faithful to the crude and childish fancies of the time! What is read in the tale, in the main, is less the eternal lesson of the possibilities of hypocrisy—by no means a novel and not at all an improving lesson—than the simple phantasmagoria of a superstitious and much bedeviled age. To take another instance of communal coloring in the hundred short tales of Hawthorne, the commonplace incidents told in "The Wives of the Dead" set forth circumstances and moments of customary tragedy in the houses of a seacoast village. The story is told out of the life of the time, out of the occupations and the fatality of humble people in the usual routine of work and sleep and death; but it is drenched with Hawthorne's temperament. No other pen could have written it. In quite a different way, "Drowne's Wooden Image," is yet more individual and Hawthornesque, to use the term that best designates the thing. It has to do with an artist temperament in a carver of wood, and with the transformation that love wrought upon his skill, when once he carved a figure for the bowsprit of a ship. The tale belongs

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with the small group in Hawthorne's works that deal directly with the experiences of the artistic life. The humbleness of the wood-carver and his association with ships fit in with the community; but his talent, vitalized as it was by love, was a thing of personal delicacy, and the power to evoke it from the environment was Hawthorne's peculiar spell.

Hawthorne's genius, indeed, penetrated his material to such a degree as to take complete possession of it, though the finished blend may seem to have more of realism in one place and more of fancy in another. Whether the community or the temperament of the writer comes more to the fore, it is the romance of New England that the page gives up,—the New England of a romantic imagination, now almost as well established in tradition as history itself. It is not merely that Hawthorne sheds the sympathetic and penetrative light of indigenous genius upon a thousand facets of the life and circumstances where New England was bred by the sea and in the upland on the edge of the early and withdrawing wilderness; he did this, and it is wonderful with what a fulness of miscellaneous illustration of the people, the times and the interests of old New England he has made his works a deposit, as it were, of past generations; but amid all this diversity of age and sex and circumstance, of era and creed, of history and legend, of the look of the forest and the sea and the meadows, he drew nearer and nearer, as he grew older in art and wisdom, to

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the heart of it all, to the spell of the soil that placed all these things in a spiritual medium, wrapped them in it and saw them through it; in other words, first of all, his material was neither dramatic nor picturesque, not merely human, neither emotional nor esthetic, but it was simply and above all *moral* material; nothing else in it greatly counted for him; and it was by this preoccupation with and penetration into the secret of New England—old New England—that he became the great New England romancer, and its historical embodiment in our national literature.

There was a younger aspect of the New England that has now become old New England in Hawthorne's tales for children. The presence of childhood in his minor works is a noticeable trait and often gives a gleam of sunshine and a tender touch to his musings or descriptions; but nowhere with such a concentrated charm and brightness as in the group of eager countenances that listened to the youthful story-teller of the Greek myths, which themselves seem independent of time. The two clusters of Hawthorne's Tanglewood stories stand quite apart from his other work, in an ideal realm of their own; but, in one case, they are framed, as it were, on a background of rural pictures of the Berkshire year, exquisitely beautiful, like little fresco squares of the seasons on which the childish groups are relieved, as it might be in Italian painting; and, in the second case, the listeners are felt.

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if not seen, so familiar has the essential situation of story-telling become in the series. The old New England where these tales were told was as real as the snow-storm with which this volume began, as the fishing-village and Concord and Blithedale. All these elements melt now into one field of memory, reaching back in the far distance to witchcraft days, the Gray Champion and the unchanging rock-bound coast. It is this field of memory that Hawthorne's imagination enlightens, while he draws from it the truths of life.

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CHAPTER III

HAWTHORNE'S ARTISTIC METHOD

THE artistic method of an original genius seldom seems to be deliberate; it appears, rather, to begin in instinctive motions and to be developed largely by experiment. In Hawthorne's earlier work there is no intention discernible except to write; the topic may be this or that, but the incitement is plainly self-expression, to publish what is interesting in his own mind to himself, something fanciful, it may be, or something reportorial in the form of a sketch, past or present or in no man's land. Mental activity, supported by a sharp eye and a reflective turn of thought, explains fully, perhaps, the beginnings of his genius. As time went on, however, a promise of organizing power grew visible, a nascent genius with a bent of its own; and though there was nothing wholly novel in the method that began to show, yet Hawthorne so subdued it to his personality, and released his genius in great measure by it, that it has come to be characteristically his, and qualifies his literary memory. There is much of his writing in which this artistic method does not enter, or is slightly used when employed at all; a good portion of his work was miscellaneous or non-

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descript; but as he attempted imaginative creation, he relied upon his method more and more till it was practically exhausted, so far as it was serviceable to him. It is most convenient to examine it in the major short tales of imagination, where it is most clear.

The primary element in Hawthorne's art is the image, clearly and vividly grasped by the eye. It is an image, like others, out of the general flux, or flow of sensations that make up our impression of the outer world as a moving picture. Its appeal to him was due to the strength of his power of observation, and it afforded the sensuous basis of his genius. But he was not only an observer, he was a thinker; and, more than a thinker, he was a brooder upon thought,—often, upon one thought. The idea, the second element in his art, belongs in a higher region than sensation, in a world whose principle is intellectual order rather than temporal sequence—that is, in the universal world of thought, not in the world of events. The effort of art is to blend these two worlds,—to pass from the world of the image to the world of the idea, and accumulate truth on the way without loss of distinctness in the vision. Hawthorne was an expert in the process, for he had tried it in many forms. He was well endowed for the attempt, both by his eye for the image and his mind for the idea. He was equally at home in the world of sense and in that of thought; he would use the former to express the latter, for the former is pri-

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mary, at first, as the latter is fundamental at last. To observe his fortunes with his task is to have a lesson in the ways of a genius with his art.

Hawthorne, in that portion of his general work which is capital in importance, was accustomed to select some simple object, such as a veil or a flower or a butterfly, and then by gradual touches to give it secret and mysterious significance till the object, whatever it was, became a sort of fetish to the mind, —a thing whose meaning and essential nature was wholly apart from its outward seeming. The image, so presented, always had a relation to an idea, sometimes in one way, sometimes in another. He gazed at the image, as one looks at a crystal globe, according to old stories, till he saw something; by a process of repetition, suggestion, echo, which may briefly be described as overlay, and by a profound artistic concentration of interest, curiosity and mystery, he charged the image with mental meaning until it seemed to deny its original nature, and become, with various degrees of success, a thing of thought instead of sense. It is sometimes customary to describe this method of writing as allegory; but it is an inexact expression and does not discriminate between the many ways in which the spell is woven. A simple case is the tale of "The Minister's Veil." The story is that a minister wore a veil for many years over his face so that none should see his features. The idea developed is, of course, the secrecy of men's bosoms. The veil is "allegorical," and

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"stands for" the impenetrable curtain of the human breast. But Hawthorne's tale is more delicately told than these words imply. The veil, the physical object, is moralized and becomes a type, the universal garment of secrecy, and the particular minister himself, whatever his story, fades into a class of men; both veil and minister have entered into the intellectual world.

The main theme of this tale—the solitude of a man's bosom—had a potent fascination for Hawthorne. He was himself of a solitary nature and accustomed to the unheard voices that deepen solitude. His understanding of such natures came from sympathy, grounded upon much intimate acquaintance with loneliness. The Puritan heredity in him, the moral prepossession of his genius, gave direction to his thoughts and, especially in this field, a dark color to his imaginations; the secrecy of men's bosoms, in itself a normal and necessary incident of life —and there are happy as well as dark secrets—became another name for hypocrisy, or it suggested the gloom natural to religious musings in those parts and in the age from which for the most part his genius derived its traits. Solitary natures with a guilty sense were, through life, a main theme of his brooding; the situation, indeed, was one of his fixed ideas, from which his imagination never freed itself. In the Protean changes of such a creative idea it is natural to find the notion of suppressed crimes recur again and again in his work, and also

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to discover in his description of the motions of the human breast something of the knowledge and skill of a confessor. It is here, in particular, that the psychologist is seen at work, as it were in his study, upon the diseased heart, to draw out its secret. Hawthorne, before he had run his course, made this feature a cardinal element in his novels.

In the tale of "The Minister's Veil" the relation of the image to the idea is obvious; there is no true fusion of the two, but each is kept clearly apart. The union between the sensuous and mental elements grows more close in other narratives, and a certain scale, denoting their approach, might be taken almost as an index of the artistic success of the method. In "Lady Eleanor's Mantle" the proud and haughty Lady Eleanor is presented from the first as already in moral isolation by her character, which is summarized and expressed in the rich mantle she wears; but this moral isolation is made evident only by the physical isolation which results from the dread and secret contagion hidden in the folds of the garment. The very sign and outward seat of her pride, the mantle, is the center and source of her humiliation; from being the one who casts off, she becomes herself an outcast from human society. The physical union of the image with the person involved is closer than in the instance of the veil; and there results from this a sense of subtler fusion between the image and the idea itself. This intimate fusion is still more keenly felt in the tale

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of "The Birthmark," at the conclusion of which the moral lesson is drawn that imperfection is the necessary condition of mortality to the degree that with its removal death must supervene, just as, when the birthmark fades, the woman dies. A still greater blend of the physical image with the person is found in "Rappaccini's Daughter," the woman who has inhaled the fragrance of the poison-tree until she is herself its living flower. In the cases mentioned the physical image is, in an ascending scale, more completely personified; and the mental idea is, correspondingly, more vitally expressed.

The fusion of the image with the idea, without the intervention of a human person, is more curiously wrought out in what is by far the most subtle of Hawthorne's tales in this manner, both in thought and workmanship, "The Artist of the Beautiful." The artist is, here, indeed, an intermediary in the process; but the image in no way enters into his own personality,—on the contrary, it proceeds from the artist, as a creation. The Butterfly is his work—a mechanical toy, perhaps; or, perhaps, it is a "spiritualization of matter." What else is all art but a spiritualization of matter? The story of his work is told with infinite knowledge,—how it began, how it was broken off, how it was finished, and also what was its worth to the artist, when he had succeeded. The union of the image with the idea in this tale amounts to identity: it is complete. The idea absorbs the image, and leaves it, at the end, a thing of

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"little value," like the "glittering fragments" in the infant's palm at the conclusion of the story, which illustrates the method of Hawthorne's art, in this regard, at its highest power:

"But to return to Owen Warland. It was his fortune, good or ill, to achieve the purpose of his life. Pass we over a long space of intense thought, yearning effort, minute toil, and wasting anxiety, succeeded by an instant of solitary triumph: let all this be imagined; and then behold the artist, on a winter evening, seeking admittance to Robert Danforth's fireside circle. There he found the man of iron, with his massive substance thoroughly warmed and attempered by domestic influences. And there was Annie, too, now transformed into a matron, with much of her husband's plain and sturdy nature, but imbued, as Owen Warland still believed, with a finer grace, that might enable her to be the interpreter between strength and beauty. It happened, likewise, that old Peter Hovenden was a guest this evening at his daughter's fireside; and it was his well-remembered expression of keen, cold criticism that first encountered the artist's glance.

"'My old friend Owen!' cried Robert Danforth, starting up, and compressing the artist's delicate fingers with a hand that was accustomed to gripe bars of iron. 'This is kind and neighborly to come to us at last. I was afraid your perpetual motion had bewitched you out of the remembrance of old times.'

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"'We are glad to see you!' said Annie, while a blush reddened her matronly cheek. 'It was not like a friend to stay from us so long.'

"'Well, Owen,' inquired the old watchmaker, as his first greeting, 'how comes on the beautiful? Have you created it at last?'

"The artist did not immediately reply, being startled by the apparition of a young child of strength that was tumbling about on the carpet,—a little personage who had come mysteriously out of the infinite, but with something so sturdy and real in his composition that he seemed moulded out of the densest substance which earth could supply. This hopeful infant crawled towards the new-comer, and setting himself on end, as Robert Danforth expressed the posture, stared at Owen with a look of such sagacious observation that the mother could not help exchanging a proud glance with her husband. But the artist was disturbed by the child's look, as imagining a resemblance between it and Peter Hovenden's habitual expression. He could have fancied that the old watchmaker was compressed into this baby shape, and looking out of those baby eyes, and repeating, as he now did, the malicious question:—

"'The beautiful, Owen! How comes on the beautiful? Have you succeeded in creating the beautiful?'

"'I have succeeded,' replied the artist, with a momentary light of triumph in his eyes and a smile of

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sunshine, yet steeped in such depth of thought that it was almost sadness. 'Yes, my friends, it is the truth. I have succeeded.'

"'Indeed!' cried Annie, a look of maiden mirthfulness peeping out of her face again. 'And is it lawful, now, to inquire what the secret is?'

"'Surely; it is to disclose it that I have come,' answered Owen Warland. 'You shall know, and see, and touch, and possess the secret! For, Annie,—if by that name I may still address the friend of my boyish years,—Annie, it is for your bridal gift that I have wrought this spiritualized mechanism, this harmony of motion, this mystery of beauty. It comes late, indeed; but it is as we go onward in life, when objects begin to lose their freshness of hue and our souls their delicacy of perception, that the spirit of beauty is most needed. If,—forgive me, Annie, —if you know how to value this gift, it can never come too late.'

"He produced, as he spoke, what seemed a jewel box. It was carved richly out of ebony by his own hand, and inlaid with a fanciful tracery of pearl representing a boy in pursuit of a butterfly, which, elsewhere, had become a winged spirit, and was flying heavenward; while the boy, or youth, had found such efficacy in his strong desire that he ascended from earth to cloud, and from cloud to celestial atmosphere, to win the beautiful. This case of ebony the artist opened, and bade Annie place her finger on its edge. She did so, but almost screamed as a

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butterfly fluttered forth, and, alighting on her finger's tip, sat waving the ample magnificence of its purple and gold-speckled wings, as if in prelude to a flight. It is impossible to express by words the glory, the splendor, the delicate gorgeousness which were softened into the beauty of this object. Nature's ideal butterfly was here realized in all its perfection; not in the pattern of such faded insects as flit among earthly flowers, but of those which hover across the meads of paradise for child-angels and the spirits of departed infants to disport themselves with. The rich down was visible upon its wings; the luster of its eyes seemed instinct with spirit. The firelight glimmered around this wonder—the candles gleamed upon it; but it glistened apparently by its own radiance, and illuminated the finger and outstretched hand on which it rested with a white gleam like that of precious stones. In its perfect beauty, the consideration of size was entirely lost. Had its wings overreached the firmament, the mind could not have been more filled or satisfied.

"'Beautiful! beautiful!' exclaimed Annie. 'Is it alive? Is it alive?'

"'Alive? To be sure it is,' answered her husband. 'Do you suppose any mortal has skill enough to make a butterfly, or would put himself to the trouble of making one, when any child may catch a score of them in a summer's afternoon? Alive? Certainly! But this pretty box is undoubtedly of our friend Owen's manufacture; and really it does him credit.'

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"At this moment the butterfly waved its wings anew, with a motion so absolutely lifelike that Annie was startled, and even awestricken; for, in spite of her husband's opinion, she could not satisfy herself whether it was indeed a living creature or a piece of wondrous mechanism.

" 'Is it alive?' she repeated, more earnestly than before.

" 'Judge for yourself,' said Owen Warland, who stood gazing in her face with fixed attention.

"The butterfly now flung itself upon the air, fluttered round Annie's head, and soared into a distant region of the parlor, still making itself perceptible to sight by the starry gleam in which the motion of its wings enveloped it. The infant on the floor followed its course with his sagacious little eyes. After flying about the room, it returned in a spiral curve and settled again on Annie's finger.

" 'But is it alive?' exclaimed she again; and the finger on which the gorgeous mystery had alighted was so tremulous that the butterfly was forced to balance himself with his wings. 'Tell me if it be alive, or whether you created it.'

" 'Wherefore ask who created it, so it be beautiful?' replied Owen Warland. 'Alive? Yes, Annie; it may well be said to possess life, for it has absorbed my own being into itself; and in the secret of that butterfly, and in its beauty,—which is not merely outward, but deep as its whole system,—is represented the intellect, the imagination, the sensibility,

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the soul of an Artist of the Beautiful! Yes; I created it. But'—and here his countenance somewhat changed—'this butterfly is not now to me what it was when I beheld it afar off in the daydreams of my youth.'

" 'Be it what it may, it is a pretty plaything,' said the blacksmith, grinning with childlike delight. 'I wonder whether it would condescend to alight on such a great clumsy finger as mine? Hold it hither, Annie.'

"By the artist's direction, Annie touched her finger's tip to that of her husband; and, after a momentary delay, the butterfly fluttered from one to the other. It preluded a second flight by a similar, yet not precisely the same, waving of wings as in the first experiment; then, ascending from the blacksmith's stalwart finger, it rose in a gradually enlarging curve to the ceiling, made one wide sweep around the room, and returned with an undulating movement to the point whence it had started.

" 'Well, that does beat all nature!' cried Robert Danforth, bestowing the heartiest praise that he could find expression for; and indeed, had he paused there, a man of finer words and nicer perception could not easily have said more. 'That goes beyond me, I confess. But what then? There is more real use in one downright blow of my sledge hammer than in the whole five years' labor that our friend Owen has wasted on this butterfly.'

"Here the child clapped his hands and made a

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great babble of indistinct utterance, apparently demanding that the butterfly should be given him for a plaything.

"Owen Warland, meanwhile, glanced sidelong at Annie, to discover whether she sympathized in her husband's estimate of the comparative value of the beautiful and the practical. There was, amid all her kindness towards himself, amid all the wonder and admiration with which she contemplated the marvellous work of his hands and incarnation of his idea, a secret scorn—too secret, perhaps, for her own consciousness, and perceptible only to such intuitive discernment as that of the artist. But Owen, in the latter stages of his pursuit, had risen out of the region in which such a discovery might have been torture. He knew that the world, and Annie as the representative of the world, whatever praise might be bestowed, could never say the fitting word nor feel the fitting sentiment which should be the perfect recompense of an artist who, symbolizing a lofty moral by a material trifle,—converting what was earthly to spiritual gold,—had won the beautiful into his handiwork. Not at this latest moment was he to learn that the reward of all high performance must be sought within itself, or sought in vain. There was, however, a view of the matter which Annie and her husband, and even Peter Hovenden, might fully have understood, and which would have satisfied them that the toil of years had here been worthily bestowed. Owen Warland might have told them

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that this butterfly, this plaything, this bridal gift of a poor watchmaker to a blacksmith's wife, was, in truth, a gem of art that a monarch would have purchased with honors and abundant wealth, and have treasured it among the jewels of his kingdom as the most unique and wondrous of them all. But the artist smiled and kept the secret to himself.

"'Father,' said Annie, thinking that a word of praise from the old watchmaker might gratify his former apprentice, 'do come and admire this pretty butterfly.'

"'Let us see,' said Peter Hovenden, rising from his chair, with a sneer upon his face that always made people doubt, as he himself did, in everything but a material existence. 'Here is my finger for it to alight upon. I shall understand it better when once I have touched it.'

"But, to the increased astonishment of Annie, when the tip of her father's finger was pressed against that of her husband, on which the butterfly still rested, the insect drooped its wings and seemed on the point of falling to the floor. Even the bright spots of gold upon its wings and body, unless her eyes deceived her, grew dim, and the glowing purple took a dusky hue, and the starry luster that gleamed around the blacksmith's hand became faint and vanished.

"'It is dying! it is dying!' cried Annie in alarm.

"'It has been delicately wrought,' said the artist, calmly. 'As I told you, it has imbibed a spiritual es-

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sence—call it magnetism, or what you will. In an atmosphere of doubt and mockery its exquisite susceptibility suffers torture, as does the soul of him who instilled his own life into it. It has already lost its beauty; but in a few moments more its mechanism would be irreparably injured.'

"'Take away your hand, father!' entreated Annie, turning pale. 'Here is my child; let it rest on his innocent hand. There, perhaps, its life will revive and its colors grow brighter than ever.'

"Her father, with an acrid smile, withdrew his finger. The butterfly then appeared to recover the power of voluntary motion, while its hues assumed much of their original luster, and the gleam of starlight, which was its most ethereal attribute, again formed a halo round about it. At first, when transferred from Robert Danforth's hand to the small finger of the child, this radiance grew so powerful that it positively threw the little fellow's shadow back against the wall. He, meanwhile, extended his plump hand as he had seen his father and mother do, and watched the waving of the insect's wings with infantine delight. Nevertheless, there was a certain odd expression of sagacity that made Owen Warland feel as if here were old Peter Hovenden, partially, and but partially, redeemed from his hard skepticism into childish faith.

"'How wise the little monkey looks!' whispered Robert Danforth to his wife.

"'I never saw such a look on a child's face,' an-

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swered Annie, admiring her own infant, and with good reason, far more than the artistic butterfly. 'The darling knows more of the mystery than we do.'

"As if the butterfly, like the artist, were conscious of something not entirely congenial in the child's nature, it alternately sparkled and grew dim. At length it arose from the small hand of the infant with an airy motion that seemed to bear it upward without an effort, as if the ethereal instincts with which its master's spirit had endowed it impelled this fair vision involuntarily to a higher sphere. Had there been no obstruction, it might have soared into the sky and grown immortal. But its luster gleamed upon the ceiling; the exquisite texture of its wings brushed against that earthly medium; and a sparkle or two, as of stardust, floated downward and lay glimmering on the carpet. Then the butterfly came fluttering down, and, instead of returning to the infant, was apparently attracted towards the artist's hand.

" 'Not so! not so!' murmured Owen Warland, as if his handiwork could have understood him. 'Thou has gone forth out of thy master's heart. There is no return for thee.'

"With a wavering movement, and emitting a tremulous radiance, the butterfly struggled, as it were, towards the infant, and was about to alight upon his finger; but while it still hovered in the air, the little child of strength, with his grandsire's sharp

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and shrewd expression in his face, made a snatch at the marvellous insect and compressed it in his hand. Annie screamed. Old Peter Hovenden burst into a cold and scornful laugh. The blacksmith, by main force, unclosed the infant's hand, and found within the palm a small heap of glittering fragments, whence the mystery of beauty had fled forever. And as for Owen Warland, he looked placidly at what seemed the ruin of his life's labor, and which was yet no ruin. He had caught a far other butterfly than this. When the artist rose high enough to achieve the beautiful, the symbol by which he made it perceptible to mortal senses became of little value in his eyes while his spirit possessed itself in the enjoyment of the reality."

It is plain that Hawthorne's art in this tale is quite different from, and goes far beyond that in such a narrative as "The Gray Champion." The latter story was strong in both character and events —a dramatic scene of action; the tale, the concluding paragraphs of which have just been given, is carefully wrought in character and incident, with discriminating contrasts and finished interior scenes, but its strength lies, not in its action, but in its meaning; it is a moral, not an epic tale. Hawthorne, as he matured, wrote, as it were, a palimpsest; there was a hidden writing underneath the script, and the script was only the key to what was beneath. He was, to this extent, indeed, a writer of allegory;

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but this would be an incomplete designation of his peculiar art, which was less simple than direct allegory. His art was, in fact, abstract, however concrete it might be in superficial appearance; there was an increasing element of thought in it, and its significance grew with this element and his subtle skill in handling it; something was continually being infused into description and incident, which fed them with meaning, till the very contents of the work became abstract,—one was in the presence of thought rather than mere life. In other words, he had worked out his craftsmanship; he had made the passage from sense to thought without loss of sharpness or vividness, and presented in his writings truth in place of facts,—that is, what is real in all persons instead of one only. The peculiarity of Hawthorne's art is that the element of the abstract in it is so engrossing and takes so imaginative a form.

Such a temperament as Hawthorne's is apt, in its history, to lose contact with art and become absorbed in mere thought, to be simply intellectualized. The vigor of Hawthorne's imagination, however,—its clear visual edge or eye for the object, and his interest in sights and sounds,—withheld him from such an extreme; and, indeed, he seems to have been one of that breed of thinkers who need some substance to think in, as it were,—that physical object in which, as a matter of fact, he did so often think. To do his thinking so is the salvation of an artist. At another remove, in a higher region of thought,

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the mystic thinks in the symbol. Hawthorne, however, was not a true symbolist; he was a plain artist, —with the senses, the mind and the heart of an artist; and he had, to an uncommon degree, that disinterestedness which is thought in some quarters to be so valuable a trait of the artist, if not, indeed, indispensable. As an observer, in his note-books, it is noticeable to what an extent he simply mirrored what he saw, with what lucidity he gives it back. He seems, at times, to be only such a mirror of life, giving it back uncolored by his personality, as a pure medium. There was a negative side to him, a certain irresponsiveness, a lack of interest, a lethargy, a dulness; one looks in vain in his career for deep convictions or any enthusiasm of nature, and, in that age of many reforms and stirring public interests, his apathy is the more noticeable; the story of Blithedale and of Brook Farm displays him as practically untouched by the moral passions of his time.

Such aloofness from contemporary affairs does not imply any lack of knowledge of them; on the contrary, it is abundantly evident that Hawthorne was well acquainted with the intellectual movement about him, its social experiments and quasi-scientific affiliations, such as Fourierism, mesmerism and the minor reforms in which his community was then so prolific; but these things, despite his natural curiosity, left him for the most part quite unconcerned. A certain stolidity of temperament was, perhaps,

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fundamental in him; at all events, his isolation, socially, due to his separation from the world in early manhood and his feeling that the current of life had left him thrown aside, had generated in him a sense of disengagement from the world, an attitude as if he were concerned only as an observer of life, which was uncommonly favorable to the mood of artistic disinterestedness. Whatever was the reason, the absence of vital contemporary interests in him is obvious, and a capital fact. He was a pure artist, and his preferred world was the imagination; he never descended from it and departed to mingle in the matters of practical life at the Boston or Salem Custom House, or at Blithedale, without falling into black moods of discouragement and the homelessness of the exile; always, at the touch of the world, his genius froze. Whether he dealt with the colonial tradition or with fables of his own invention, he was apart from the current realities about him; he gradually freed his imagination from the aid of either historic or contemporary fact in the effort to enter into the universal world of pure art, which is valid without regard to time or place.

The instrument by which he reached this development was the physical image in various modifications, which he transmuted into ideas of moral significance and universal import, proper to that world; and he was aided in accomplishing this by his disengagement for long periods from intimate contact with the practical world, and by a disinterestedness

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of temperament, which appears to have been native with him. Convictions, except of a primary kind and proceeding from an indigenous morality in his Puritan heredity, did not enter into his work; reform, then rampant in the community, did not deflect his art; indeed, it may fairly be said that he broadened morals more than morals narrowed him. He made the Puritan, for all his isolation in the wilderness, a world-figure in literary art. Puritanism, a great moral phenomenon, has its most vivid American literary record, for the world, in his work. The lesser moral phenomena of his own time left slight traces there, comparatively negligible, as in the story of Blithedale. Hawthorne's undeniable aloofness from contemporary life was thus rather a matter of his biography than of his genius. It was, indeed, favorable to his genius, a truly artistic aloofness, however undesigned or unwilling, which left his eye clear and his mind unpreoccupied and his heart unprejudiced; fundamentally he was of the Puritan inheritance, but to seek any more particular description of his moral affinity with his own age would be futile.

Picturesque aspects and romantic episodes of colonial history, the legend of the Indian, the pioneer and the early settler, had been treated descriptively and at times poetized by the greater writers of our first literary awakening in the nineteenth century. In Longfellow and Whittier local tradition in New England had found its scribes, while truly

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continental themes and distant regions of the settlement had occupied the former, in his Indian and Acadian narratives. The fundamental secular myth of history had thus been recorded, defined and expanded in imaginative literature with ample breadth by both poets and novelists. The distinction of Hawthorne, peculiarly, was not that he was the most vivid romanticist among the many who fell heir to one or another portion of the Puritan tradition to which he most gave artistic form and color, but rather that he penetrated that tradition to its moral substance. That was the center of his interest, the very kernel of his meditation. What he presented was a series of dramatic episodes, longer or shorter, more or less loosely bound together, but they were, besides, moral scenes. The spell in them, which he relied on for fascination, was their moral meaning, —their significance, that is, to the life of the soul. His own eye obeyed this fascination; and though he minded well, artist-like, his garniture of facts in the physical world, his real intent was to bare the spiritual fact. His meditation was the sounder in that it worked through his imagination, his mind still thinking in the image, as was said above; but a conclusion of thought, in however imaginative a shape, was the end in view.

It is this prepossession of his art with its moral theme, which accounts for the engrossing interest to him of the abstract element in his method, and particularly for the marked exclusions that finally char-

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acterized it. His interest was in states of the soul,— not so much in the history of *a* soul, according to the Browning formula, but the states through which the soul, *per se,* that is, by its own nature, passes under the experience of life. To state it negatively, he took the slightest interest in the events that originally occasioned or led up to the spiritual crises involved, and he cared as little for the after fortunes of the persons in whom these crises arose; his sense of individual life, apart from its illustrative character, is feeble; or, in other words, persons did not interest him, for, under no other supposition can one account for the negligent way in which he dismisses them, at the end of the play. It follows that action is at its lowest value in his work, which finds its theme rather in the results of the action in the soul and their sequence there. The story grows more and more a psychological study, general in essence, of the nature of evil, or sin, in the soul's experience, when one comes to the core of Hawthorne's interest in human life; the abstract method he employs results in a meditative vein in his work that can never be disregarded by his readers, for it is its substantive part; but, it should be said, it is only in his maturer tales that these characteristics become plain and commanding elements. Nevertheless the germ of these developments can be clearly observed in the short stories that preceded the great novels.

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CHAPTER IV

THE COLONIAL TRADITION

THE colonial tradition of New England, as a written record, exists in many forms,—history, genealogy, legend. It finds in Hawthorne its imaginative form, and one so distinguished by his genius that it bids fair to be the great literary memorial of that age. His genius was, perhaps, as is apt to be the case, an excess of temperament; and his peculiar rendering of the "times before" results from the blend of his native instinct for the moral element in life, wherein he was true to race, with his artistic taste for a romantic investiture of it, which belonged rather to his personality. It may well be that different readers will be aware of these two interests in various degrees; to one his tales will seem full of old moralities, to another full of old-fashioned scents like a garden of long ago, and to a very few these impressions will merge in one; but his works will bring the aroma of time to all. Hawthorne had an idiosyncratic power to gather this aroma, and wrap it in words. *The House of the Seven Gables* by its very name proclaims itself a nest of the old tradition. It has a family sound, and seems to con-

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centrate in itself the story of generations. Indeed, one might better call the tale a myth than a novel; for it rises, as a myth builds itself up, out of secular elements, though with realistic features. While it narrates individual lives and depicts particular circumstances, it recalls a whole age. It signifies, as one reads, not a group of little lives, but a long period, an era, as it were. Taken in its obvious meaning, it is true, the story is one of the extinction of a family, really rather a slight sketch of shabby gentility worn threadbare; and it is complicated by the shadow of a crime in one generation and an ancestral curse in another. The family tale, however, is so treated as to generalize a community, and particularly to appeal to the affections of an old race for dying things, endeared by familiarity in youth. The mould of decay is over all that bygone life; the simplicity of its ways and circumstances deepens its peculiar pathos and gives it the value that belongs to an old man's memories of his early days; it is the past, romantically colored,—the past of a whole countryside,—that comes forth, like invisible writing, on the page.

The House of the Seven Gables, in unfolding the story of the family, concentrates attention on the situations and the persons. The tale moves forward by a succession of set scenes, each carefully elaborated, as if for its own sake, and the whole thus resembles a history told in tableaux. The motive spring lies far in the background of events, and

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the method of construction recalls that secret history, or machination, antecedent to the story, that Scott sometimes employed, as a means of unraveling his mystery. Thus the ancestral curse of witchcraft days is the furthest background of this family history, and nearer lies a second background in the prison life of Clifford, who is the male protagonist of the household drama. Both these, in which the plot of implacable fate and its means alike are to be sought, are left subordinate and in shadow, as was Hawthorne's way; he was not interested in events, but in states of mind. He throws his high lights on the scenes and the persons; but the enveloping plot, with its romantic accessories,—the ancestral curse, the mythical "eastern estate," the prison of Clifford,—he leaves subsidiary, and often in his narrative hardly more than suggested. Places and figures, however, scenes, he stages with exquisite care for their subtleties, their refinement and significance to the eye and the mind; especially, he gives them an atmosphere of penetrating old-time reality; and it is these things, in the main, that one carries away from Hawthorne in mind and memory. The local flavor, the flavor of the soil, is uncommonly strong, too; one feels that these are things that might have happened in Salem,—the picturesque, the pathetic, the sentimental things of a provincial, almost a colonial city, of long ago. This union of highly developed individuality in the treatment, with universal human significance in the meaning, is the

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mark of Hawthorne's genius. It turned a parochial tale into a national memorial.

It seems unlikely to the analyst of Hawthorne's genius that there was much method in its madness. The note-book, with which the reader is already familiar from the preceding chapters, was plainly a seed-plot from which whatever was fit was transferred into new soil as from a nursery garden. This is the same process as that which accounts for "old Moodie" in *The Blithedale Romance.* In *The House of the Seven Gables* it accounts for the scene of the hens. "Uncle Venner," with his fish-horn, might have been one of the "Sights from a Steeple." It is obvious, too, that Hawthorne's prolonged apprenticeship to the short story had hardened a literary habit in him, more common in juvenile than in mature work. He had become, to a certain extent, an artist in miniature. He was accustomed, in his sketches and tales, to brief spaces, narrow horizons, few elements, and to labor on these with microscopic attention and infinite detail; and the natural result was that, on attempting the larger task of a romance or novel, he fell into a method of agglomeration in art. He assembled his materials, as the phrase goes now, and they were apt, though they harmonized well enough, not to fuse entirely. The tale of *The House of the Seven Gables,* for example, is threefold,—the story of old Maule, that of Alice, and that of Clifford and his group; but they are separable parts; indeed, a later

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novelist of the more massive sort would have made three narratives of the matter. Similarly each scene, as it comes before the eye, seems a thing apart, as it were, and studied for itself. One is not keenly aware of the vital logic, binding the parts; and in a tale of hereditary guilt, this is a defect that would greatly impair its convincing power, were it not understood, in fact, that the curse is really an artistic convention, allowed purely for the sake of the story, since, otherwise, the story could not go on. In *The House of the Seven Gables,* the convention is the more readily granted, because it embodies traditional truth, and thus gives the right historical perspective to the colonial tale. At the same time, quite apart from the three phases of the curse, the disparate materials of the story give the impression of miscellaneousness, of a rather varied collection of Hawthornesque items. The truth is that this is characteristic of Hawthorne's method, in his larger works. There is no mother-idea out of which they develop, with a single, overpowering, master life of their own.

The small scale on which Hawthorne had been trained to work not only gives this multiple, miscellaneous and somewhat uncorrelated character to his novels, but it underlies, most probably, his noticeable artistic economy. The principle of economy is, indeed, fundamental in art, and happy is the talent that can command it in any way without loss. It may be the very flower of taste, as in some examples

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of primitive or alien art; or it may only mask poverty of invention or insight. In Hawthorne, his habitual use of few characters and slight incidents is, perhaps, due to the early restrictions upon him of the short story or sketch, shut naturally in brief limits. There was not room for more. And the rule is the same for prose as for poetry: the briefer the lyric, the greater the perfection must be, both of substance and of workmanship. Thus with Hawthorne, dealing habitually with few and slight elements in his art, elaboration of the material became a necessity,—hence, his detail, his minutiæ, his shading, and all that exquisite refinement of surface and delicacy of atmosphere in his work. His economy of material reaches, at times, almost to parsimony. And here, too, one is reminded of his garden days at Concord and the forest walks at Blithedale; after all is said in his beautiful language, of the fallen autumn leaf like a drop of blood, the mosquito that was frost-bitten, and the gust of violets along a wood road, how little he had to see! The elaboration of it in observation, in imagination, is marvelous; but to find artistic value in that countryside and in that anæmic life of the decaying gabled house in old Salem, what eyes he must have had, and what insight! The parsimony was in his subject and environment, truly; but from this very fact he plucked no small part of the power that his genius developed, because his theme almost thrust upon him certain qualities of observation and workmanship

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wherein his greatness, as a writer, came to lie. He belonged, in a certain sense, to what are called in the history of art, the "little masters," by virtue of these qualities, in his tales, or portions of his romances, done on a small scale; his artistic economies allied him to their mode of work; and this manner, so far as he carried it over into his longer novels, injured the unity of impression in them so that one is apt to remember particular scenes in them rather than their general course and climax. It is the scenes, rather than the plot or the idea, that count; in fact, one has to clarify the latter by thinking, before they are quite clear. On the other hand, one sees the successive situations with great vividness.

In other words, Hawthorne's art, in its greater examples, at least, was essentially composite, an adding of cell to cell. This method allowed him to avail himself with greater ease of the miscellaneous elements of his rather haphazard New England upbringing among men and books. His mind was naturally acquisitive; and, however lax were his social instincts, he used his eyes with a good deal of intimacy upon their objects. He really absorbed experience, so far as it lay in the purview of observation; shy and solitary as he was, it is unlikely that any one along that coast was more accurately familiar with its look and with the habits and thoughts of its folk and their forefathers. This knowledge, taken in bulk, was his race-inheritance, whether it came to him by direct observation of the things and people

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where he lived and walked, or by reading the homely memorials of the wilderness years in these same places. Eager and acute to see, to notice and to meditate what he saw, and with a sympathetic genius to interpret and to understand, because he was of the blood and knew the common past, he was an ideal historiographer of the community; but, besides, there was added to his blood the secret drop of artistic genius that made him a creator instead of a recorder of life. He put forth his works as things of imagination instead of chronicles, but their substance was the life that had been lived, as he divined it after long observation and meditation; naturally there were many phases of this life, many peculiarities, many thoughts, and in taking possession of the riches of this inheritance he found a miscellany of things. A composite method was forced upon him.

Hawthorne, himself, was aware of the greater kinship between him and the story of the old Salem house than existed in his other works. This tale was not so high-strung in imagination and moral feeling, and was more on the level of his familiar days; the less severe parts of the composition are hardly more than journalizing. In the story the things of the eye or the memory, such as the look of streets and gardens and their customary incidents, come easily, and almost without notice; situation and dialogue, on the contrary, are more self-conscious, and the legend of Alice shows imaginative tension; in some scenes one feels that they

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are set, and the death of the judge, wearisome and forced in style, is positively "staged," to use the critical word; but, notwithstanding, all these things proceed naturally from Hawthorne's cabinet and tastes, and represent the contents of his mind and heart more fully and characteristically than his other novels. The book familiarizes one with the author, more than any other of his writings. This, together with the abiding charm of the old life it represents, accounts for the favor, almost the affection, in which it is held by lovers of Hawthorne, whatever may be said of its technique. Technique is the excellence of the understanding, in any case. Technique is posterior to genius, which is rather allied to what used to be called the pure reason, and acts by intuition. It is not because of any inferiority of technique, which some might be disposed to see in the miscellaneous character of the Salem story, that these remarks are made; but rather to illustrate and amplify the manner in which, before the golden age of "technique," free genius found out its way.

It was the spirit of the artist, moving in the mass of inherited legend and environment which was Hawthorne's material, that compensated for any flaws and unconcerning defects in his work and gave it the fascination that has assured its long success. The artistic impulse was the master element in his genius that used his other qualities of observation and meditation merely as media of the creative light.

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It is curious to observe this artistic instinct at work in his recurring interest in the fine arts. He had a cousinly feeling for them, a predilection that, however, was, perhaps, not rare in the New England of his early manhood, but was significant, rather, of its amateurish and awakening culture. One remembers the Salem interest in "Flaxman's designs," the reproduced masterpieces of painting on Hawthorne's furniture, the visits to the Boston Athenæum treasures, in his American years; but, particularly, in connection with the tales, one recalls the aquatic figure of "Drowne's Wooden Image," and especially the marvelous mechanical toy of "The Artist of the Beautiful," with its profound esthetic meditation. How frequent and how various, too, is his use of the "portrait"! The portrait was, indeed, a common romantic property, and often called into requisition in many lands. Hawthorne, like others, obeyed its fascinating eyes, and continually resorted to it for imaginative effect. In the "House of Seven Gables" itself, the portrait has a place of honor, with the deed of the "eastern estate," secreted behind it in the wainscot, it will be remembered, and is, in fact, the symbolic embodiment of the old ancestral curse of the Pyncheon house. But, in Hawthorne's work, the portrait was much more than a common romantic property. It indicated, by his repeated use of it and in connection with other like matters, an underlying artistic impulse and inclination to the beautiful in its pure forms that was

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fundamental in his genius. More than the observer or the moralist whom he is easily seen to be, he was born an artist; by native endowment, and by the conditions, the impulse was loosed in literature, and resulted in an even more delicate, richer and more profound beauty in the expression of life by imagination, thought and the charm of words; but the essentially esthetic quality of Hawthorne's genius is, perhaps, more apparent at first by his obvious cousinship in spirit with the wood-carver, the butterfly maker, the painter and the sculptor, from first to last. He was, at least, a brother of all the crafts. This artistic impulse led him to study and arrange his material in detail, and to give the peculiarly exquisite finish that distinguishes his literary touch; but, in larger ways, it also taught him the sense of the enveloping harmonies within which a whole work of art is contained,—must, in fact, be contained; and to this instinct and sense must be attributed the numerous reduplications, echoes and gradations that combine to make up his major effects and to unify them. Composite as his art is, a higher harmony enfolds its elements and reconciles them. This is due to his being, primarily, an artist in imaginative work,—a creator, as has been said, more than an observer or a moralist.

In the substance of his work, apart from the quality and coloring of his material, Hawthorne was, preeminently, it need hardly be said, a psychologist. His place was on that fall of the wave, just beyond

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the crest of a literary movement, when, action and even character being exhausted as major themes, interest centers in analysis of motives, growths and conditions, that is, in the inner rather than the outer history of human nature, the underlying grounds of both action and character. In this development he anticipated the taste of the next age, and illustrated in fiction the vein of intellectual subtlety characteristic of New England culture from Edwards to Emerson. He did this without intention, without much thinking about it, as the rhodora blooms; simply it belonged to the soil to bloom so. The old religion had made brooding on human nature, and especially its moral phases, almost congenital in the race, and the habit had been intensified in Hawthorne by his situation in his maturing years; the secret alike of his meditation and of his observation was the lonely life of an active mind. His heredity concentrated his interest on the moral world; and being the child of that civilization, thinking over and ruminating its old thoughts, Hawthorne naturally found his deeper mental life a meditation on sin, especially on the ways of evil with a man, its working in the breast and its results. In *The House of the Seven Gables* it is evil in the form of an inherited curse rather than in the individual, it is true, —vengeance long drawn out; or, if vengeance be too strong an expression, it is retribution, penalty, the inexorable debt that must be paid with time. The theme, the idea, is of the Puritan moral scheme—

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especially in the element of inheritance involved—and thus was native to Hawthorne; but in his generation its reality was hardly sufficiently felt to make it effective in fiction without a delicate touch and much management. At the end, indeed, the inherited curse of the house is the most tenuous part of the tale, while the entirely human character of Hepzibah stands clear in the foreground.

Hawthorne's profounder moral work, in fact, is to be found elsewhere. In this tale he was distracted from the main theme of sin, in human nature, by the half-romantic attraction of the curse, clinging to generation after generation, till it was finally solved in new lives; and he was also diverted from too serious a view by the fascination of the environment and atmosphere of old Salem, as it was known to his sympathies. The curse, after all, even in the very home of the witches, had come to be "an old wives' tale"; try to vivify it as he might, Hawthorne could not make it credible as other than a romantic background, fitting the locality and the figures; but this relaxation of the moral fiber of the story left more ample room, in which to unfold its gentle and humble humanity. It is, indeed, a lifeless life, a faded bloom, that is disclosed in the old and shut-up house. All things have left it but an old sister's love; and hither, late in her years, comes back the broken favorite brother, released from his unjust prison. They are victims of life, these two. The curse is but a story in their dimmed memories—how can it be

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thought to account for their lives?—but, for all that, one way and another, their lives are ruined. Hepzibah, the weary watcher of many years, is expecting her brother, and has made what feeble preparation she can for their common support by setting up the famous "cent-shop" in the basement story:

"It has already been observed, that, in the basement story of the gable fronting on the street, an unworthy ancestor, nearly a century ago, had fitted up a shop. Ever since the old gentleman retired from trade, and fell asleep under his coffin-lid, not only the shop-door, but the inner arrangements, had been suffered to remain unchanged; while the dust of ages gathered inch-deep over the shelves and counter, and partly filled an old pair of scales, as if it were of value enough to be weighed. It treasured itself up, too, in the half-open till, where there still lingered a base sixpence, worth neither more nor less than the hereditary pride which had here been put to shame. Such had been the state and condition of the little shop in old Hepzibah's childhood, when she and her brother used to play at hide-and-seek in its forsaken precincts. So it had remained, until within a few days past.

"But now, though the shop-window was still closely curtained from the public gaze, a remarkable change had taken place in its interior. The rich and heavy festoons of cobweb, which it had cost a long ancestral succession of spiders their life's

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labor to spin and weave, had been carefully brushed away from the ceiling. The counter, shelves, and floor had all been scoured, and the latter was overstrewn with fresh blue sand. The brown scales, too, had evidently undergone rigid discipline, in an unavailing effort to rub off the rust, which, alas! had eaten through and through their substance. Neither was the little old shop any longer empty of merchantable goods. A curious eye, privileged to take an account of stock, and investigate behind the counter, would have discovered a barrel,—yea, two or three barrels and half ditto,—one containing flour, another apples, and a third, perhaps, Indian meal. There was likewise a square box of pine-wood, full of soap in bars; also, another of the same size, in which were tallow-candles, ten to the pound. A small stock of brown sugar, some white beans and split peas, and a few other commodities of low price, and such as are constantly in demand, made up the bulkier portion of the merchandise. It might have been taken for a ghostly or phantasmagoric reflection of the old shop-keeper Pyncheon's shabbily provided shelves, save that some of the articles were of a description and outward form which could hardly have been known in his day. For instance, there was a glass pickle-jar filled with fragments of Gibraltar rock; not, indeed, splinters of the veritable stone foundation of the famous fortress, but bits of delectable candy, neatly done up in white paper. Jim Crow, moreover, was seen

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executing his world-renowned dance, in gingerbread. A party of leaden dragoons were galloping along one of the shelves, in equipments and uniform of modern cut; and there were some sugar figures, with no strong resemblance to the humanity of any epoch, but less unsatisfactorily representing our own fashions than those of a hundred years ago. Another phenomenon, still more strikingly modern, was a package of lucifer matches, which, in old times, would have been thought actually to borrow their instantaneous flame from the nether fires of Tophet.

"In short, to bring the matter at once to a point, it was incontrovertibly evident that somebody had taken the shop and fixtures of the long-retired and forgotten Mr. Pyncheon, and was about to renew the enterprise of that departed worthy, with a different set of customers. Who could this bold adventurer be? And, of all places in the world, why had he chosen the House of the Seven Gables as the scene of his commercial speculations?

"We return to the elderly maiden. She at length withdrew her eyes from the dark countenance of the Colonel's portrait, heaved a sigh,—indeed, her breast was a very cave of Æolus that morning,—and stept across the room on tiptoe, as is the customary gait of elderly women. Passing through an intervening passage, she opened a door that communicated with the shop, just now so elaborately described. Owing to the projection of the upper

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story—and still more to the thick shadow of the Pyncheon Elm, which stood almost directly in front of the gable—the twilight, here, was still as much akin to night as morning. Another heavy sigh from Miss Hepzibah! After a moment's pause on the threshold, peering towards the window with her near-sighted scowl, as if frowning down some bitter enemy, she suddenly projected herself into the shop. The haste, and, as it were, the galvanic impulse of the movement, were really quite startling.

"Nervously—in a sort of frenzy, we might almost say—she began to busy herself in arranging some children's playthings, and other little wares, on the shelves and at the shop-window. In the aspect of this dark-arrayed, pale-faced, lady-like old figure there was a deeply tragic character that contrasted irreconcilably with the ludicrous pettiness of her employment. It seemed a queer anomaly, that so gaunt and dismal a personage should take a toy in hand; a miracle, that the toy did not vanish in her grasp; a miserably absurd idea, that she should go on perplexing her stiff and sombre intellect with the question how to tempt little boys into her premises! Yet such is undoubtedly her object. Now she places a gingerbread elephant against the window, but with so tremulous a touch that it tumbles upon the floor, with the dismemberment of three legs and its trunk; it has ceased to be an elephant, and has become a few bits of musty gingerbread. There, again, she has upset a tumbler of marbles, all of

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which roll different ways, and each individual marble, devil-directed, into the most difficult obscurity that it can find. Heaven help our poor old Hepzibah, and forgive us for taking a ludicrous view of her position! As her rigid and rusty frame goes down upon its hands and knees, in quest of the absconding marbles, we positively feel so much the more inclined to shed tears of sympathy, from the very fact that we must needs turn aside and laugh at her. For here,—and if we fail to impress it suitably upon the reader, it is our own fault, not that of the theme,—here is one of the truest points of melancholy interest that occur in ordinary life. It was the final throe of what called itself old gentility. A lady—who had fed herself from childhood with the shadowy food of aristocratic reminiscences, and whose religion it was that a lady's hand soils itself irremediably by doing aught for bread—this born lady, after sixty years of narrowing means, is fain to step down from her pedestal of imaginary rank. Poverty, treading closely at her heels for a lifetime, has come up with her at last. She must earn her own food, or starve! And we have stolen upon Miss Hepzibah Pyncheon, too irreverently, at the instant of time when the patrician lady is to be transformed into a plebeian woman.

"In this republican country, amid the fluctuating waves of our social life, somebody is always at the drowning-point. The tragedy is enacted with as continual a repetition as that of a popular drama on

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a holiday; and, nevertheless, is felt as deeply, perhaps, as when an hereditary noble sinks below his order. More deeply; since, with us, rank is the grosser substance of wealth and a splendid establishment, and has no spiritual existence after the death of these, but dies hopelessly along with them. And, therefore, since we have been unfortunate enough to introduce our heroine at so inauspicious a juncture, we would entreat for a mood of due solemnity in the spectators of her fate. Let us behold, in poor Hepzibah, the immemorial lady,—two hundred years old, on this side of the water, and thrice as many on the other,—with her antique portraits, pedigrees, coats of arms, records and traditions, and her claim, as joint heiress, to that princely territory at the eastward, no longer a wilderness, but a populous fertility,—born, too, in Pyncheon Street, under the Pyncheon Elm, and in the Pyncheon House, where she has spent all her days,—reduced now, in that very house, to be the hucksteress of a cent-shop.

"This business of setting up a petty shop is almost the only resource of women, in circumstances at all similar to those of our unfortunate recluse. With her near-sightedness, and those tremulous fingers of hers, at once inflexible and delicate, she could not be a seamstress; although her sampler, of fifty years gone by, exhibited some of the most recondite specimens of ornamental needlework. A school for little children had been often in her thoughts; and, at

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one time, she had begun a review of her early studies in the New England Primer, with a view to prepare herself for the office of instructress. But the love of children had never quickened in Hepzibah's heart, and was now torpid, if not extinct; she watched the little people of the neighborhood from her chamber-window, and doubted whether she could tolerate a more intimate acquaintance with them. Besides, in our day, the very A B C has become a science greatly too abstruse to be any longer taught by pointing a pin from letter to letter. A modern child could teach old Hepzibah more than old Hepzibah could teach the child. So—with many a cold, deep heart-quake at the idea of at last coming into sordid contact with the world, from which she had so long kept aloof, while every added day of seclusion had rolled another stone against the cavern-door of her hermitage—the poor thing bethought herself of the ancient shop-window, the rusty scales, and dusty till. She might have held back a little longer; but another circumstance, not yet hinted at, had somewhat hastened her decision. Her humble preparations, therefore, were duly made, and the enterprise was now to be commenced. Nor was she entitled to complain of any remarkable singularity in her fate; for, in the town of her nativity, we might point to several little shops of a similar description, some of them in houses as ancient as that of the Seven Gables; and one or two, it may be, where a decayed gentlewoman stands behind the

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counter, as grim an image of family pride as Miss Hepzibah Pyncheon herself.

"It was overpoweringly ridiculous—we must honestly confess it—the deportment of the maiden lady while setting her shop in order for the public eye. She stole on tiptoe to the window, as cautiously as if she conceived some bloody-minded villain to be watching behind the elm-tree, with intent to take her life. Stretching out her long, lank arm, she put a paper of pearl buttons, a jew's-harp, or whatever the small article might be, in its destined place, and straightway vanished back into the dusk, as if the world need never hope for another glimpse of her. It might have been fancied, indeed, that she expected to minister to the wants of the community unseen, like a disembodied divinity or enchantress, holding forth her bargains to the reverential and awe-stricken purchaser in an invisible hand. But Hepzibah had no such flattering dream. She was well aware that she must ultimately come forward, and stand revealed in her proper individuality; but, like other sensitive persons, she could not bear to be observed in the gradual process, and chose rather to flash forth on the world's astonished gaze at once.

"The inevitable moment was not much longer to be delayed. The sunshine might now be seen stealing down the front of the opposite house, from the windows of which came a reflected gleam, struggling through the boughs of the elm-tree, and enlightening the interior of the shop more distinctly

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than heretofore. The town appeared to be waking up. A baker's cart had already rattled through the street, chasing away the latest vestige of night's sanctity with the jingle-jangle of its dissonant bells. A milkman was distributing the contents of his cans from door to door; and the harsh peal of a fisherman's conch shell was heard far off, around the corner. None of these tokens escaped Hepzibah's notice. The moment had arrived. To delay longer would be only to lengthen out her misery. Nothing remained, except to take down the bar from the shop-door, leaving the entrance free—more than free—welcome, as if all were household friends—to every passerby, whose eyes might be attracted by the commodities at the window. This last act Hepzibah now performed, letting the bar fall with what smote upon her excited nerves as a most astounding clatter. Then—as if the only barrier betwixt herself and the world had been thrown down, and a flood of evil consequences would come tumbling through the gap—she fled into the inner parlor, threw herself into the ancestral elbow-chair, and wept."

Dear old Hepzibah! What loving kindness she had! It was likely to be a strange adventure for her; but she took the castaway of life into her boat, frail craft that it was, for the end of the voyage.

The book is full of such realistic scenes minutely studied from the early years of the nineteenth cen-

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tury in the neighborhoods that Hawthorne knew. They give up their full local flavor, doubtless, only to those who can recall the marvelous views on old-fashioned wall-papers at Salem, the stately, white bannisters and paneled walls of the houses of that spacious era, just subsequent to the Revolution, the box-bordered walks of the trim back-gardens, the sunshine-flooded tulips, the scented breath of the spearmint patch! Provincial life, if it has, in the main, private delights and a charm incommunicable except to the native-born, owns also, since Theocritus, something of pastoral magic for all the world. The rural scene, the rustic tale are, perhaps, the commoner and grosser forms in which the spell is woven in our generation, and especially the novel of the provinces, with a touch of dialect in speech as well as in manners, is to the fore; but the magic needs no shepherd's tale nor idyllic poetry to find a home in the heart, for, after all, the best magic is unadulterated human nature, wherever found. Dwellers in cities, too, and people in country houses have their chronicles, their "life of the province," as many modern writers of fiction bear witness in all languages. The type fascinates certain hearts in all lands; and in the streets of old Salem it found a wonderful soil, and a wonderful genius.

The old town lives again in these pages, if indeed so feeble a flow may be called life. The anæmia of the book pervades it; for its points of crisis are the death-throes of the lives that are dying, the old

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curse wearing itself out; while the fresh lives, the new blood, in Phœbe, the niece, and her lover, the daguerreotypist, are used only as background and episode. The most vital part is the reproduction of the general scene, the manners and customs, the little incidents, the way life went on. The first customer, a small fellow of the neighborhood, enters the shop, making the warning bell ring, with an effect of real, waking life, comparable only to the knocking at the gate in *Macbeth*. It is amazing, what a noise he makes! How he seems to set the world going! What boyhood memories he unlocks! Gibraltars and black-jacks! Those gingerbread elephants! Those lead soldiers! Yet to what end is this inrush of youthful spirits, or of the more mature young womanhood and young manhood in the maiden sweetness of Phœbe and the democratic "newness" of the daguerreotypist? They may begin a new story, but they will never carry on the tale of the old house; at the end of that tale, the old house will be dead, and every step is toward the catastrophe. It is as if one were witnessing an execution. It is this temperament of the book, this atmosphere pervading it, this irremediableness in misery, after all, however caused, that imbues it with somberness. It is only in this impression that the fatal element in the curse is truly felt. Though one disbelieves in the reality of the curse, he can not altogether escape from it in the imagination. There are ghosts in the old house, whatever one be-

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lieves. The voices of the lovers, the call-bell of the little boy, Uncle Venner's fish-horn do not drive them away; and, meanwhile, as it were in their presence, the old-time village life goes on. Hepzibah gets the breakfast of broiled mackerel, and Clifford, "the guest," descends the stairs to his first meal "at home," as if there were no ghosts there, harkening in the corners and peering from the old Colonel's portrait.

"Hepzibah's small and ancient table, supported on its slender and graceful legs, and covered with a cloth of the richest damask, looked worthy to be the scene and centre of one of the cheerfullest of parties. The vapor of the broiled fish arose like incense from the shrine of a barbarian idol, while the fragrance of the Mocha might have gratified the nostrils of a tutelary Lar, or whatever power has scope over a modern breakfast-table. Phœbe's Indian cakes were the sweetest offering of all,—in their hue befitting the rustic altars of the innocent and golden age,—or, so brightly yellow were they, resembling some of the bread which was changed to glistening gold when Midas tried to eat it. The butter must not be forgotten,—butter which Phœbe herself had churned, in her own rural home, and brought it to her cousin as a propitiatory gift,—smelling of clover-blossoms, and diffusing the charm of pastoral scenery through the dark-panelled parlor. All this, with the quaint gorgeousness

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of the old china cups and saucers, and the crested spoons, and a silver cream-jug (Hepzibah's only other article of plate, and shaped like the rudest porringer), set out a board at which the stateliest of old Colonel Pyncheon's guests need not have scorned to take his place. But the Puritan's face scowled down out of the picture, as if nothing on the table pleased his appetite.

. . . . . .

"'Hush!' whispered Hepzibah. 'Be cheerful! whatever may happen, be nothing but cheerful!'

"The final pause at the threshold proved so long, that Hepzibah, unable to endure the suspense, rushed forward, threw open the door, and led in the stranger by the hand. At the first glance, Phœbe saw an elderly personage, in an old-fashioned dressing-gown, of faded damask, and wearing his gray or almost white hair of an unusual length. It quite overshadowed his forehead, except when he thrust it back, and stared vaguely about the room. After a very brief inspection of his face, it was easy to conceive that his footstep must necessarily be such an one as that which, slowly, and with as indefinite an aim as a child's first journey across a floor, had just brought him hitherward. Yet there were no tokens that his physical strength might not have sufficed for a free and determined gait. It was the spirit of the man that could not walk. The expression of his countenance—while, notwithstand-

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ing, it had the light of reason in it—seemed to waver, and glimmer, and nearly to die away, and feebly to recover itself again. It was like a flame which we see twinkling among half-extinguished embers; we gaze at it more intently than if it were a positive blaze, gushing vividly upward,—more intently, but with a certain impatience, as if it ought either to kindle itself into satisfactory splendor, or be at once extinguished.

"For an instant after entering the room, the guest stood still, retaining Hepzibah's hand, instinctively, as a child does that of the grown person who guides it. He saw Phœbe, however, and caught an illumination from her youthful and pleasant aspect, which, indeed, threw a cheerfulness about the parlor, like the circle of reflected brilliancy around the glass vase of flowers that was standing in the sunshine. He made a salutation, or, to speak nearer the truth, an ill-defined, abortive attempt at courtesy. Imperfect as it was, however, it conveyed an idea, or, at least, gave a hint, of indescribable grace, such as no practised art of external manners could have attained. It was too slight to seize upon at the instant; yet, as recollected afterwards, seemed to transfigure the whole man.

" 'Dear Clifford,' said Hepzibah, in the tone with which one soothes a wayward infant, 'this is our cousin Phœbe,—little Phœbe Pyncheon,—Arthur's only child, you know. She has come from the

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country to stay with us awhile; for our old house has grown to be very lonely now.'

" 'Phœbe? — Phœbe Pyncheon? — Phœbe?' repeated the guest, with a strange sluggish, ill-defined utterance. 'Arthur's child! Ah, I forget! No matter! She is very welcome!' . . .

"At one of these moments of less torpid, yet still imperfect animation, Phœbe became convinced of what she had at first rejected as too extravagant and startling an idea. She saw that the person before her must have been the original of the beautiful miniature in her cousin Hepzibah's possession. Indeed, with a feminine eye for costume, she had at once identified the damask dressing-gown, which enveloped him, as the same in figure, material, and fashion, with that so elaborately represented in the picture. This old, faded garment, with all its pristine brilliancy extinct, seemed, in some indescribable way, to translate the wearer's untold misfortune, and make it perceptible to the beholder's eye. It was the better to be discerned, by this exterior type, how worn and old were the soul's more immediate garments; that form and countenance, the beauty and grace of which had almost transcended the skill of the most exquisite of artists. It could the more adequately be known that the soul of the man must have suffered some miserable wrong, from its earthly experience. There he seemed to sit, with a dim veil of decay and ruin betwixt him

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and the world, but through which, at flitting intervals, might be caught the same expression, so refined, so softly imaginative, which Malbone—venturing a happy touch, with suspended breath—had imparted to the miniature! There had been something so innately characteristic in this look, that all the dusky years, and the burden of unfit calamity which had fallen upon him, did not suffice utterly to destroy it."

Hepzibah embodies one phase of the tragedy of women's lives in old New England; and, apart from the special circumstances of her lot, she typifies a class. Other later writers have attempted to portray it; but she stands unrivaled, the protagonist of all her kind. Clifford, her counterpart, is presented in a different vein of pathos; and in him, particularly, is seen an example of Hawthorne's preoccupation with artistic themes and the analysis of the artistic nature, of the sort that has been already alluded to. The use of the miniature by Malbone, in the last citation, is an instance of Hawthorne's employment of properties of the kind; here it serves as a minor echo of the old Colonel's portrait, which is, of course, primary in the decorative scheme, if one may use such a phrase without giving too much sense of design. The general purpose is to develop and unveil with an almost imperceptible increment and fulness the esthetic side of Clifford's now broken nature. With what slow approaches Haw-

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thorne places him in the presence of simple objects of beauty and shows his feeble responses, as if by brief flashes of a rallying mind! The whole scene is against the background of the old prison-life; the age and grim scowl of Hepzibah are used for contrast, the youth of Phœbe concentrates the elements of charm, the physical coarsening of Clifford's nature by his privations gives deep-cut shadows; at last the scene is focused in the flower, itself a kind of replica of the young girl in her maidenhood and a symbol of the fresh bud putting forth on the old branch of the decaying house. But let the romancer, himself, speak!—

"Not to speak it harshly or scornfully, it seemed Clifford's nature to be a Sybarite. It was perceptible, even there, in the dark old parlor, in the inevitable polarity with which his eyes were attracted towards the quivering play of sunbeams through the shadowy foliage. It was seen in his appreciating notice of the vase of flowers, the scent of which he inhaled with a zest almost peculiar to a physical organization so refined that spiritual ingredients are moulded in with it. It was betrayed in the unconscious smile with which he regarded Phœbe, whose fresh and maidenly figure was both sunshine and flowers,—their essence, in a prettier and more agreeable mode of manifestation. Not less evident was this love and necessity for the Beautiful, in the instinctive caution with which, even so soon, his

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eyes turned away from his hostess, and wandered to any quarter rather than come back. It was Hepzibah's misfortune,—not Clifford's fault. How could he,—so yellow as she was, so wrinkled, so sad of mien, with that odd uncouthness of a turban on her head, and that most perverse of scowls contorting her brow,—how could he love to gaze at her? But, did he owe her no affection for so much as she had silently given? He owed her nothing. A nature like Clifford's can contract no debts of that kind. It is—we say it without censure, nor in diminution of the claim which it indefeasibly possesses on beings of another mould—it is always selfish in its essence; and we must give it leave to be so, and heap up our heroic and disinterested love upon it so much the more, without a recompense. Poor Hepzibah knew this truth, or, at least, acted on the instinct of it. So long estranged from what was lovely as Clifford had been, she rejoiced—rejoiced, though with a present sigh, and a secret purpose to shed tears in her own chamber—that he had brighter objects now before his eyes than her aged and uncomely features. They never possessed a charm; and if they had, the canker of her grief for him would long since have destroyed it.

"The guest leaned back in his chair. Mingled in his countenance with a dreamy delight, there was a troubled look of effort and unrest. He was seeking

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to make himself more fully sensible of the scene around him; or, perhaps, dreading it to be a dream, or a play of imagination, was vexing the fair moment with a struggle for some added brilliancy and more durable illusion.

"'How pleasant!—How delightful!' he murmured, but not as if addressing any one. 'Will it last? How balmy the atmosphere through that open window! An open window! How beautiful that play of sunshine! Those flowers, how very fragrant! That young girl's face, how cheerful, how blooming!—a flower with the dew on it, and sunbeams in the dew-drops! Ah! this must be all a dream! A dream! A dream! But it has quite hidden the four stone walls!'

"Then his face darkened, as if the shadow of a cavern or a dungeon had come over it; there was no more light in its expression than might have come through the iron grates of a prison window,—still lessening, too, as if he were sinking farther into the depths. Phœbe (being of that quickness and activity of temperament that she seldom long refrained from taking a part, and generally a good one, in what was going forward) now felt herself moved to address the stranger.

"'Here is a new kind of rose, which I found this morning in the garden,' said she, choosing a small crimson one from among the flowers in the vase. 'There will be but five or six on the bush this sea-

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son. This is the most perfect of them all; not a speck of blight or mildew in it. And how sweet it is!—sweet like no other rose! One can never forget that scent!'

"'Ah!—let me see!—let me hold it!' cried the guest, eagerly seizing the flower, which, by the spell peculiar to remembered odors, brought innumerable associations along with the fragrance that it exhaled. 'Thank you! This has done me good. I remember how I used to prize this flower,—long ago, I suppose, very long ago!—or was it only yesterday? It makes me feel young again! Am I young? Either this remembrance is singularly distinct, or this consciousness strangely dim! But how kind of the fair young girl! Thank you! Thank you!'"

But, it is time to draw the curtain:

"A slumberous veil diffused itself over his countenance, and had an effect, morally speaking, on its naturally delicate and elegant outline, like that which a brooding mist, with no sunshine in it, throws over the features of a landscape. He appeared to become grosser,—almost cloddish. If aught of interest or beauty—even ruined beauty—had heretofore been visible in this man, the beholder might now begin to doubt it, and to accuse his own imagination of deluding him with whatever grace had flickered over that visage, and whatever exquisite lustre had gleamed in those filmy eyes.

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"Finally, his chair being deep and softly cushioned, Clifford fell asleep. Hearing the more regular rise and fall of his breath (which, however, even then, instead of being strong and full, had a feeble kind of tremor, corresponding with the lack of vigor in his character),—hearing these tokens of settled slumber, Hepzibah seized the opportunity to peruse his face more attentively than she had yet dared to do. Her heart melted away in tears; her profoundest spirit sent forth a moaning voice, low, gentle, but inexpressibly sad. In this depth of grief and pity she felt that there was no irreverence in gazing at his altered, aged, faded, ruined face. But no sooner was she a little relieved than her conscience smote her for gazing curiously at him, now that he was so changed; and, turning hastily away, Hepzibah let down the curtain over the sunny window, and left Clifford to slumber there."

Feeble as the life is in the old house, whatever comes near it and most pertains to it lives most. The outlying parts of the story, the subordinate interests, are less vital. The idyl of Phœbe and the young daguerreotypist fades away with their youthful talk of the new age. The heavy tragedy of the villain's taking off by apoplexy, though it is the climax of the plot, notwithstanding the elaborate narrative, remains only an episode; the house-interior and the wandering figures flitting there hold the center of the stage. The fatuity of the lives of

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Hepzibah and Clifford reaches its climax, when their courage fails them in the attempt to go to church:

"'Were I to be there,' he rejoined, 'it seems to me that I could pray once more, when so many human souls were praying all around me!'

"She looked into Clifford's face, and beheld there a soft natural effusion; for his heart gushed out, as it were, and ran over at his eyes, in delightful reverence for God, and kindly affection for his human brethren. The emotion communicated itself to Hepzibah. She yearned to take him by the hand, and go and kneel down, they two together,—both so long separate from the world, and, as she now recognized, scarcely friends with Him above,—to kneel down among the people, and be reconciled to God and man at once.

"'Dear brother,' said she, earnestly, 'let us go! We belong nowhere. We have not a foot of space in any church to kneel upon; but let us go to some place of worship, even if we stand in the broad aisle. Poor and forsaken as we are, some pew-door will be opened to us!'

"So Hepzibah and her brother made themselves ready,—as ready as they could in the best of their old-fashioned garments, which had hung on pegs, or been laid away in trunks, so long that the dampness and mouldy smell of the past was on them,—made themselves ready, in their faded bettermost, to go to

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church. They descended the staircase together,—gaunt, sallow Hepzibah, and pale, emaciated, age-stricken Clifford! They pulled open the front door, and stepped across the threshold, and felt, both of them, as if they were standing in the presence of the whole world, and with mankind's great and terrible eye on them alone. The eye of their Father seemed to be withdrawn, and gave them no encouragement. The warm sunny air of the street made them shiver. Their hearts quaked within them at the idea of taking one step farther.

"'It can not be, Hepzibah!—it is too late,' said Clifford, with deep sadness. 'We are ghosts! We have no right among human beings,—no right anywhere but in this old house, which has a curse on it, and which, therefore, we are doomed to haunt! And, besides,' he continued, with a fastidious sensibility, inalienably characteristic of the man, 'it would not be fit nor beautiful to go! It is an ugly thought that I should be frightful to my fellow-beings, and that children would cling to their mothers' gowns at sight of me!'

"They shrank back into the dusky passage-way, and closed the door. But, going up the staircase again, they found the whole interior of the house tenfold more dismal, and the air closer and heavier, for the glimpse and breath of freedom which they had just snatched. They could not flee; their jailer had but left the door ajar in mockery, and stood behind it to watch them stealing out. At the threshold, they

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felt his pitiless gripe upon them. For, what other dungeon is so dark as one's own heart! What jailer so inexorable as one's self!"

What is there left to them but flight from the place of their abandonment by man and God?

What does it matter that it all ended at last, as stories will, happily, in a clarification of incident, in sunshine and gold, a retreat for old Uncle Venner and an open door to the future for Phœbe and her lover! Stories will end so. But the real story, the genealogical story, the story of the curse,—did Hawthorne believe it at all?—did he believe in some unescapable moral inheritance, a mystery of fate,—or did he merely embroider on the groundwork of old fancies, the village and landscape scenes of his youth?

However that may be, it is for the portrayal of old Salem that one reads the tale. It was this "old Salem," and not his contemporary abiding-place, to which Hawthorne felt the ancestral cling which he defined as "not love, but instinct." He recalls, in another place, the grounds for this,—the succession of his forefathers in the old colony from its first planting, and especially the hundred-year line of ship-masters, the boy of fourteen succeeding the gray-head in each generation, as he "took his hereditary place before the mast, confronting the salt spray and the gale, which had blustered against his sire and grandsire"; and he declares the native

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hold on the heart of a soil that is through long time the family place of birth and burial. Then he speaks as a son of the soil. "It is no matter that the place is joyless for him; that he is weary of the old wooden houses, the mud and dust, the dead level of site and sentiment, the chill east-wind, and the chillest of social atmospheres; all these, and whatever faults besides he may see or imagine, are nothing to the purpose. The spell survives, and just as powerfully as if the natal spot had been an earthly paradise. So has it been in my case." He owns to feeling that he has disappointed his worthy forebears. "No aim, that I have ever cherished, would they recognize as laudable; no success of mine—if my life, beyond its domestic scope, had ever been brightened by success—would they deem otherwise than worthless, if not positively disgraceful. . . And yet, let them scorn me as they will, strong traits of their nature have intertwined themselves with mine." It was unfortunate that a man, destined to recreate the life of his native place through long stages of history should have felt such a cleavage with the very theme of his tale. This cleavage, however, was felt quite as keenly on the other side. Salem was not, at the time, nor has it been, very friendly to her great citizen. The charm of Hawthorne's sketches of the old village and town life did not quickly dissipate the indifferent or adverse atmosphere of his contemporary days, nor did his fame waft it away in the next generation. But,

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happily, the creations of the imagination free themselves from prejudice, ill-feeling, and personality, and live in a larger world than the village of their birth.

It should be borne in mind, too, in connection with this phase of Hawthorne's life that his grievance, if it may be called such, was almost as much against the world as against Salem. Salem was only the spot where he felt the rub of the world most. Embitterment is plain in the words he came to write finally of the place of his nativity and his fellow-citizens; but, probably, it was the condition of the literary life that was, after all, most to blame. He had to earn his bread by other means than his creative talent, and it is not surprising that there was friction of one kind and another. The truth is that, probably, it was by the merest accident of his having gone to college with classmates afterwards of great political power, that his career escaped a tragic ending, such as is frequent in literary annals. It was due, perhaps, to his prolonged trials, as an author, that a certain self-distrust, which amounted to a distrust of his genius, was, seemingly, developed in him. At all events, a chasm opened between him and life, in many directions, as his literary career developed. He notices, himself, the unreality that comes upon all things to the solitary dreamer, if the mood be too long protracted. His lack of intimacy with intellectual equals, unless Ellery Channing be reckoned as an exception, is noticeable. He

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seems to have belonged to those literary men who find companionship outside the limits of the craft, and have thus broader sympathies with life. He was, in such ways, of a larger nature than his fellow-authors, as has been said, and had something of Scott's "saving commonsense" in respect to his art.

Thus, from one point of view and another, it would appear that Hawthorne was characterized by his genius and isolated by it, and saw the world at Salem and was seen by it as the world would have seen him and been seen by him anywhere. The situation was merely a local case of the "prophet without honor in his own country." The years pass, and the statue rises. This is the outward and visible sign of his acceptance by his people, where the "House of the Seven Gables" is a shrine of local pilgrimage.

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CHAPTER V

THE GREAT PURITAN ROMANCE

THE first generation of New England writers of distinction fell heir to a common stock of communal beliefs and memories, which was the parent soil of their works, however diverse. Their attitude toward this body of tradition discriminates the varieties of their genius. Emerson, the most purely spiritual among them, and ardent to advance still further the light which had long burned in the hearts of the men of that lonely wilderness, was destructive of the past, a foremost radical. Longfellow, with the instinct and training of a scholar, and being, besides, a poet, was preservative of this tradition, a continuer of its finer legends and aspirations in tale and history. Hawthorne was the pure artist, who, indeed, reflected the moral sky of that old heaven under which he was born and grew into his own somber manhood, but, nevertheless, handled tradition with a predominantly artistic instinct and feeling for objective effect, harmonious arrangement, and unity of expression through all modulations of contrast, episode and decoration. He was not much interested in other things, such as reform, except superficially; he minded, principally, his tale,

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and if he is deeply affected by the moral significance of what he tells, it is because that is the core of the tale as he penetrates into its meaning. If Emerson was destructive and Longfellow preservative of tradition, Hawthorne is best described as penetrating its moral substance.

He was, by nature, of a brooding temperament, being the child of a sea-faring race, and born in a community much given to meditation, with a vigorous intellectual vein in it, the result in part of its isolation and concentration of thought on religious themes. It is true his environment in his own youth and manhood was little favorable to genius. His life was in small communities, where his contact with men and affairs was at times slight, at times humdrum, and never very stimulating, it would seem, even at Concord, then the Mecca of intellect in New England. His mental food in those days was but a meager diet of experience, as he strolled through country lanes, and his writing, as has been observed, was apt to take the form of notes on vegetables, the look of trees in autumn, the behavior of sea-gulls and plover on the beach. But as he worked into his life, as even genius will, with a certain earnest intuition and sounding of the meaning, while one scene and another passed before him substantially or in fancy, he found that for him, at least, whatever the aspect of things might be within the narrow limits of experience assigned to him or others, the essential thing was moral,—that was the

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meaning at the core of all things; however trivial the scene might be, however lonely its small theater, he discerned the nobility of his material by virtue of its moral nature. One prime requirement of great art,—that it should deal with noble material,—was met in his instinctive moral view of life; here was his pathway to universal interest, the chance to make his humble treasures current in a greater world than that from which they were derived, to lift his thoughts into the general mind of man and disseminate them there, if only he had the art, under the inspiration of his genius, to deal worthily with the material at his hand.

Hawthorne had labored long at the short story, before he produced the greater work of a novel. It is said, indeed, that he first conceived *The Scarlet Letter* as a brief tale of the colonies, such as he told many a time. It is natural, in any case, to find the novel cast in the lines of a tale, that being the well-formed habit of his mind. From this early prepossession of his mind by the methods of short-story writing, doubtless, proceeded the trait that continued to characterize him, of employing only a few characters, supported by the most obvious and simple accessories in the way of setting and environment, all of which should throw their light upon the central figures. It was also natural that meditation, thought about what was going on, should be to the fore, as it had been in the allegorizing tales of his earlier years. Meditation, indeed,—the author's

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comment,—is an unusually large element in Hawthorne's way of presenting his theme. That, in fact, was always substantially an idea; and meditation, in the shape of the author's comment was the natural method of developing it,—the end of the tale being not an event, or any phase of action, for itself, but a conviction in the reader's mind. The principle of artistic economy is rigidly observed by him in the novel as it had been in the tale; the fewest characters and simple events, necessary to skeletonize the story and clothe it in time and place, in the colors of mortality, are the sole means sought to set forth the moral truth, which blazes in the garb of art from the climax. The moral truth set forth is not didactic; it is vital, and shown, whether in events or scenes, corporeally as a picture. Thus the last sentence of *The Scarlet Letter* is not a maxim, but presents a tombstone as a summary, compressing in itself the tale pictorially, itself the graven symbol of a symbol:—"It bore a device, a herald's wording of which might serve for a motto and brief description of our now completed legend; so somber is it, and relieved only by one ever-glowing point of light, gloomier than the shadow: ON A FIELD SABLE, THE LETTER A. GULES."

The scene of the romance, as presented in the book, has one quality characteristic of the highest creative art. It is perfectly isolated; Prospero's enchanted isle is not more sundered from the common world. The lonely New England wilderness,

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apart from its being Puritan, offered a fit stage for a concentrated imaginative tale, complete within itself. Although historic, by its distance in time and sentiment, it seems another soil than ours. Hawthorne intended to use but few characters in the tale; but, for all that, its meaning was general and its theme universal, and by the very nature of its thought, which involved publicity as an essential element, the tale required a social environment in which to develop; especially was this the case because it was to be, substantially, a communal tale, not one of individuals, primarily. He folded the little world of the interior drama, therefore, between the two great communal scenes, at the beginning and the end, each important and imposing in village life, as one may style it,—the public execution of the sentence of the magistrates, on one hand, and the holiday of the election sermon on the other. Except in these instances the general life touches the story only incidentally and vaguely. It is somewhat thus that the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, in Shakespeare, is isolated between the scenes of Theseus' court. The environing Puritan world, in general, in Hawthorne's tale, is felt by the public acts of condemnation and exhortation; but it is rendered only by slight and general touches, as regards persons. It serves to introduce the figures of the two male characters, and to give a guise of formality to the town's officials; but, in the main, as environment, that world is a characteristic crowd,

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like one of Shakespeare's mobs, picturesque with the wild Indian guide on the outskirts, or the Spanish sailors with the brooch of gold in their belts, and vocal with the miscellaneous voices of hard or gentle women. The early stage scenery is slight,—a village street, a prison, a scaffold and a church; and the same simplicity is observed in the later stage-settings, such as the Governor's house or the forest brook-side. The background and accessories are thus sketched in, after the visual impression and general sentiment of the community have been given, but with a sparing hand. The interior drama of the main persons becomes quickly the center of interest, like a play within a play, with only an occasional local touch to hint a larger world, such as a word on witchcraft in the forest or a glance at some embroidered sleeve of that age of needlework; and, in particular, the light beats with an ever intenser ray on the Scarlet Letter.

The fantastical gold-embroidered letter itself on Hester Prynne's bosom, as it takes the sunlight on her emergence from the prison-door, marks the climax of Hawthorne's use of the physical image to concentrate and express the idea. In accordance with his practise the action before and after the play of events he presents is veiled; the drama begins and at last ends at the scaffold. The lack of interest in persons thus evidenced is obvious. The neglect of adventure, passion, intrigue, the ways and means of life, of the character and circumstance

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out of which the drama arose, is as complete as possible; only so much is told as to furnish information necessary to the understanding of the situation. The abstract element in Hawthorne's art throws its shadow before, from the rise of the curtain. The Scarlet Letter, on its appearance, is almost an algebraic sign. It signifies a state of affairs, but no particular facts or situations beforehand, no human story of love or infatuation; it stands as if something given by hypothesis. What truth will follow therefrom is independent of time, place or person. The tale is of men's bosoms from the beginning; it is of secret things and therefore not primarily of observation, but of imagination. In this romance imagination is the eye of the soul to which alone it gives up its profound secrets. Historic fact and description, indeed, there are besides; but the heart of the story is in the gaze of the imagination on the bosoms of the three, Hester, her lover and her husband, so fatally linked. The tale is not of the passion or the sin; that chapter is closed. It is of punishment solely; and it starts, naturally, from the simple and obvious punishment, a lifelong badge of shame to be worn by the woman.

The handling of the physical image to give it growth and range of power and load it with blasting influence on these unhappy lives offers some novel traits. Repetition and reduplication are customary methods of concentration of interest and development of meaning. In the tale of "The

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Artist of the Beautiful," the physical image of the butterfly was destroyed more than once, but it reappeared from its fragments with increasing significance. The physical image of the Scarlet Letter is never destroyed, but it is repeated in other forms and persons, and, curiously enough, it is given a sort of life of its own which grows like an evil and bewitched thing. The tendency of the image to achieve physical identity with the person involved, in Hawthorne's short stories, has been pointed out in the case of "The Birthmark," and, especially in that of the poison-flower of "Rappacinni's Daughter." There it was a striking in of the image. The Scarlet Letter, however, has its origin in the soul, and proceeds outwardly to become an external stigma. Whether by public enactment, as in Hester's case, or by a secret physiological change in the minister's bosom—whatever be the particular mode employed—the essential thing is to secure practical union of the image and the idea, so far as their significance is concerned. To employ the human body, however, as the means of that union is distinctly a Hawthornesque trait, and is, no doubt, related to the speculation of his time as to the influence of the mind on the body, or of spirit on matter. It is, partly, by this device that he gives a quasi-life to the letter, an evil growth. Something in his method, here, is also due to the fact that the true action, the spiritual action, is a thing of the unseen sphere of the soul, and goes on in secret

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within the breast. It is less a developing action than a changing state. It can be observed only by signs and indications, indirectly; and, however the eye of the imagination penetrates the soul's sphere, it can tell what it sees only by material images. It is for this reason that, in default of other means, Hawthorne is really driven to express the progress of his story by presenting it as typified in the physique of the persons, in the minister and physician, and in the material accouterment and happenings of the scene, in the case of Hester.

It is essential to remember, in approaching the tale, that it is not a history of the sin, but of the punishment. This accounts for the fact that Hester's thoughts are centered on the badge; very little is said of what the great passion of life meant to her in retrospect. At the very beginning the Scarlet Letter is made to characterize her:

"On the breast of her gown, in fine red cloth, surrounded with an elaborate embroidery and fantastic flourishes of gold thread, appeared the letter A. It was so artistically done and with so much fertility and gorgeous luxuriance of fancy, that it had all the effect of a last and fitting decoration to the apparel which she wore; and which was of a splendor in accordance with the taste of the age, but greatly beyond what was allowed by the sumptuary regulations of the colony. . . . She had in her nature a rich, voluptuous, Oriental character-

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istic, a taste for the gorgeously beautiful, which, save in the exquisite productions of her needle, found nothing else, in all the possibilities of her life to exercise itself on."

The continued use by Hawthorne of this skill in needlework which Hester had, is an example of his own decorative instinct as a writer, and the delicate artistic tastes that are so frequently to be observed in his works. Needlework and works of charity became Hester's normal human life in the community; but she lived, nevertheless, in complete isolation because of the letter, which was a Pariah mark. Yet not wholly in isolation; there were avenues of thought that led straight to the breasts of others. Her eyes had been rubbed with an all-seeing ointment.

"Her imagination was somewhat affected, and, had she been of a softer moral and intellectual fibre, would have been still more so, by the strange and solitary anguish of her life. Walking to and fro, with those lonely footsteps, in the little world with which she was outwardly connected, it now and then appeared to Hester,—if altogether fancy, it was nevertheless too potent to be resisted,—she felt or fancied, then, that the scarlet letter had endowed her with a new sense. She shuddered to believe, yet could not help believing, that it gave her a sympathetic knowledge of the hidden sin in other hearts.

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She was terror-stricken by the revelations that were thus made. What were they? Could they be other than the insidious whispers of the bad angel, who would fain have persuaded the struggling woman, as yet only half his victim, that the outward guise of purity was but a lie, and that, if truth were everywhere to be shown, a scarlet letter would blaze forth on many a bosom besides Hester Prynne's? Or, must she receive those intimations—so obscure, yet so distinct—as truth? In all her miserable experience, there was nothing else so awful and so loathsome as this sense. It perplexed, as well as shocked her, by the irreverent inopportuneness of the occasions that brought it into vivid action. Sometimes the red infamy upon her breast would give a sympathetic throb, as she passed near a venerable minister or magistrate, the model of piety and justice, to whom that age of antique reverence looked up, as to a mortal man in fellowship with angels. 'What evil thing is at hand?' would Hester say to herself. Lifting her reluctant eyes, there would be nothing human within the scope of view, save the form of this earthly saint! Again, a mystic sisterhood would contumaciously assert itself, as she met the sanctified frown of some matron, who, according to the rumor of all tongues, had kept cold snow within her bosom throughout life. That unsunned snow in the matron's bosom, and the burning shame on Hester Prynne's,—what had the two in common? Or, once more, the electric thrill would give her

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warning,—'Behold, Hester, here is a companion!' —and, looking up, she would detect the eyes of a young maiden glancing at the scarlet letter, shyly and aside, and quickly averted with a faint, chill crimson in her cheeks; as if her purity were somewhat sullied by that momentary glance. O Fiend, whose talisman was that fatal symbol, wouldst thou leave nothing, whether in youth or age, for this poor sinner to revere?—such loss of faith is ever one of the saddest results of sin. Be it accepted as a proof that all was not corrupt in this poor victim of her own frailty, and man's hard law, that Hester Prynne yet struggled to believe that no fellow-mortal was guilty like herself."

The second phase of the letter is its rebirth, as it were, in Pearl, the child. This is the least convincing form that the phantasm, to style it so, takes. In spite of Hawthorne's skill in handling childish scenes with charm and tenderness, and a certain gaiety of spirits, Pearl is hardly subdued to his magic; she seems always to be in the scene for a purpose, and this is in itself inharmonious with natural childhood, while, besides, there is an essential conflict between childish innocence and the signification of the letter, which is felt as a perpetual discord, when the two are brought closely together and their union so tirelessly insisted on, as in the tale. In a certain sense, it is not too much to say that Pearl is used to torture her mother with refinements

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of pain ingeniously thought out and contrived by the author. Hawthorne not infrequently seems to "manage" his characters, as the phrase goes; nowhere else does he give this impression so clearly as in depicting little Pearl. She takes up the Scarlet Letter, like an echo that keeps on reechoing through the landscape in multiform and unexpected voices and images. In initiating this new strain of Pearl's childhood, in the history of the letter, the connection with the theme is easily made through Hester's skill in needlework, and delight in its exercise that has already been emphasized. Pearl's peculiar kind of beauty, indeed, seems to call for just this high decorative touch, which makes her like an exotic flower in the gray Puritan town; she, with her elf-like life and brilliant color, seems, no less than her mother, alien to the life in the midst of which she is found. And when she appeared, the little visitant might indeed have seemed a fairy masker from old court revelries.

"Her mother, in contriving the child's garb, had allowed the gorgeous tendencies of her imagination their full play; arraying her in a crimson velvet tunic, of a peculiar cut, abundantly embroidered with fantasies and flourishes of gold-thread. So much strength of coloring, which must have given a wan and pallid aspect to cheeks of a fainter bloom, was admirably adapted to Pearl's beauty, and made

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her the very brightest little jet of flame that ever danced upon the earth.

"But it was a remarkable attribute of this garb, and, indeed, of the child's whole appearance, that it irresistibly and inevitably reminded the beholder of the token which Hester Prynne was doomed to wear upon her bosom. It was the scarlet letter in another form; the scarlet letter endowed with life! The mother herself—as if the red ignominy were so deeply scorched into her brain that all her conceptions assumed its form—had carefully wrought out the similitude; lavishing many hours of morbid ingenuity, to create an analogy between the object of her affection and the emblem of her guilt and torture. But, in truth, Pearl was the one, as well as the other; and only in consequence of that identity had Hester contrived so perfectly to represent the scarlet letter in her appearance.

. . . . . .

"'What have we here?' said Governor Bellingham, looking with surprise at the scarlet little figure before him. 'I profess, I have never seen the like, since my days of vanity, in old King James's time, when I was wont to esteem it a high favor to be admitted to a court mask! There used to be a swarm of these small apparitions, in holiday time; and we called them children of the Lord of Misrule. But how gat such a guest into my hall?'

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"'Ay, indeed!' cried good old Mr. Wilson. 'What little bird of scarlet plumage may this be? Methinks I have seen just such figures, when the sun has been shining through a richly painted window, and tracing out the golden and crimson images across the floor. But that was in the old land. Prithee, young one, who art thou, and what hast ailed thy mother to bedizen thee in this strange fashion? Art thou a Christian child,—ha? Dost know thy catechism? Or art thou one of those naughty elfs or fairies, whom we thought to have left behind us, with other relics of Papistry, in merry old England?'

"'I am mother's child,' answered the scarlet vision, 'and my name is Pearl!'"

The scene by the brook-side, at a later moment, between Pearl, her mother and the minister, brings her into a new contact with the letter, while it happily varies the decorative quality of the childish figure. Hawthorne's fondness for mirrored effects is noticeable in the child's image in the brook. The heart of the scene, however, lies in Pearl's refusal to recognize her mother without the Scarlet Letter, just torn from her breast and cast aside. The letter has become embodied in Hester, so that she was not recognizable to her child without it. Hawthorne passes the matter off as a childish whim; but his meaning is evidently deeper than whim. It may seem like refining too much to refine so, but what

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really is set forth here is the growth of the letter, spreading out and entering more deeply in, until it absorbs these lives, like an evil monster. Hester is subject to it; at her child's will, she puts it on again; it began its career on her solitary breast, and gradually, identifying itself with her life and shadowing the world about her, it sprang to another life in Pearl, and it will continue to break out in new forms. The cling of the letter to the mind and body of both mother and child is as close as fate, and it seems impossible that they should ever be freed from it; but the evil thing, in which there is much of Puritan pitilessness, is managed with much prettiness in the woodland scenes by the sunshiny brook,—scenes that Hawthorne knew well how to paint. How tranquil it all is!—

"By this time Pearl had reached the margin of the brook, and stood on the farther side, gazing silently at Hester and the clergyman, who still sat together on the mossy tree-trunk, waiting to receive her. Just where she had paused, the brook chanced to form a pool, so smooth and quiet that it reflected a perfect image of her little figure, with all the brilliant picturesqueness of her beauty, in its adornment of flowers and wreathed foliage, but more refined and spiritualized than the reality. This image, so nearly identical with the living Pearl, seemed to communicate somewhat of its own shadowy and intangible quality to the child herself. It was

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strange, the way in which Pearl stood, looking so steadfastly at them through the dim medium of the forest-gloom; herself, meanwhile, all glorified with a ray of sunshine that was attracted thitherward as by a certain sympathy. In the brook beneath stood another child,—another and the same,—with likewise its ray of golden light. Hester felt herself, in some indistinct and tantalizing manner, estranged from Pearl; as if the child, in her lonely ramble through the forest, had strayed out of the sphere in which she and her mother dwelt together, and was now vainly seeking to return to it.

"There was both truth and error in the impression; the child and mother were estranged, but through Hester's fault, not Pearl's. Since the latter rambled from her side, another inmate had been admitted within the circle of the mother's feelings, and so modified the aspect of them all, that Pearl, the returning wanderer, could not find her wonted place, and hardly knew where she was.

" 'I have a strange fancy,' observed the sensitive minister, 'that this brook is the boundary between two worlds, and that thou canst never meet thy Pearl again. Or is she an elfish spirit, who, as the legends of our childhood taught us, is forbidden to cross a running stream? Pray hasten her; for this delay has already imparted a tremor to my nerves.'

" 'Come, dearest child!' said Hester, encouragingly, and stretching out both her arms. 'How slow thou art! When hast thou been so sluggish

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before now? Here is a friend of mine, who must be thy friend also. Thou wilt have twice as much love, henceforward, as thy mother alone could give thee! Leap across the brook, and come to us. Thou canst leap like a young deer!'

"Pearl, without responding in any manner to these honey-sweet expressions, remained on the other side of the brook. Now she fixed her bright, wild eyes on her mother, now on the minister, and now included them both in the same glance; as if to detect and explain to herself the relation which they bore to one another. For some unaccountable reason, as Arthur Dimmesdale felt the child's eyes upon himself, his hand—with that gesture so habitual as to have become involuntary—stole over his heart. At length, assuming a singular air of authority, Pearl stretched out her hand, with the small forefinger extended, and pointing evidently towards her mother's breast. And beneath, in the mirror of the brook, there was the flower-girdled and sunny image of little Pearl, pointing her small forefinger too.

"'Thou strange child, why dost thou not come to me?' exclaimed Hester.

"Pearl still pointed with her forefinger; and a frown gathered on her brow; the more impressive from the childish, the almost baby-like aspect of the features that conveyed it. As her mother still kept beckoning to her, and arraying her face in a holiday suit of unaccustomed smiles, the child stamped her

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foot with a yet more imperious look and gesture. In the brook, again, was the fantastic beauty of the image, with its reflected frown, its pointed finger, and imperious gesture, giving emphasis to the aspect of little Pearl.

"'Hasten, Pearl; or I shall be angry with thee!' cried Hester Prynne, who, however inured to such behavior on the elf-child's part at other seasons, was naturally anxious for a more seemly deportment now. 'Leap across the brook, naughty child, and run hither! Else I must come to thee!'

"But Pearl, not a whit startled at her mother's threats any more than mollified by her entreaties, now suddenly burst into a fit of passion, gesticulating violently and throwing her small figure into the most extravagant contortions. She accompanied this wild outbreak with piercing shrieks, which the woods reverberated on all sides; so that, alone as she was in her childish and unreasonable wrath, it seemed as if a hidden multitude were lending her their sympathy and encouragement. Seen in the brook, once more, was the shadowy wraith of Pearl's image, crowned and girdled with flowers, but stamping its foot, wildly gesticulating, and, in the midst of all, still pointing its small forefinger at Hester's bosom!

"'I see what ails the child,' whispered Hester to the clergyman, and turning pale in spite of a strong effort to conceal her trouble and annoyance. 'Children will not abide any, the slightest, change in the

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accustomed aspect of things that are daily before their eyes. Pearl misses something which she has always seen me wear!'

"'I pray you,' answered the minister, 'if thou hast any means of pacifying the child, do it forthwith! Save it were the cankered wrath of an old witch, like Mistress Hibbins,' added he, attempting to smile, 'I know nothing I would not sooner encounter than this passion in a child. In Pearl's young beauty, as in the wrinkled witch, it has a preternatural effect. Pacify her, if thou lovest me!'

"Hester turned again towards Pearl, with a crimson blush upon her cheek, a conscious glance aside at the clergyman, and then a heavy sigh; while, even before she had time to speak, the blush yielded to a deadly pallor.

"'Pearl,' said she, sadly, 'look down at thy feet! There!—before thee!—on the hither side of the brook!'

"The child turned her eyes to the point indicated; and there lay the scarlet letter, so close upon the margin of the stream, that the gold embroidery was reflected in it.

"'Bring it hither!' said Hester.

"'Come thou and take it up!' answered Pearl.

"'Was ever such a child!' observed Hester, aside to the minister. 'Oh, I have much to tell thee about her! But in very truth she is right as regards this hateful token. I must bear its torture a little longer,—only a few days longer,—until we shall have left

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this region and look back hither as to a land which we have dreamed of. The forest cannot hide it! The mid-ocean shall take it from my hand, and swallow it up forever!'

"With these words, she advanced to the margin of the brook, took up the scarlet letter, and fastened it again into her bosom. Hopefully, but a moment ago, as Hester had spoken of drowning it in the deep sea, there was a sense of inevitable doom upon her, as she thus received back this deadly symbol from the hand of fate. She had flung it into infinite space!—she had drawn an hour's free breath! —and here again was the scarlet misery, glittering on the old spot! So it ever is, whether thus typified or no, that an evil deed invests itself with the character of doom. Hester next gathered up the heavy tresses of her hair, and confined them beneath her cap. As if there were a withering spell in the sad letter, her beauty, the warmth and richness of her womanhood, departed, like fading sunshine; and a gray shadow seemed to fall across her.

"When the dreary change was wrought, she extended her hand to Pearl.

" 'Dost thou know thy mother now, child?' asked she, reproachfully, but with a subdued tone. 'Wilt thou come across the brook, and own thy mother, now that she has her shame upon her,—now that she is sad?'

" 'Yes; now I will!' answered the child, bounding across the brook, and clasping Hester in her

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arms. 'Now thou art my mother indeed! And I am thy little Pearl!' "

The history of the letter in the breast of the minister is, almost too obviously, a vivid contrast, an elaborate antithesis, to the open scarlet stigma on Hester's bosom. In her case, the story is of a punishment striking in, coloring and absorbing life and growing vital therein; his tale is of a secret sin striking out, obscuring the face of life and transforming it to his eyes, and finally becoming physically manifest in his own body. The history of the punishment, in either case, can only be told by sign and symbol, for it is all an inward thing, a thing of the spirit, and although its workings have carnal manifestations they are essentially secret and bodiless; hence a certain touch of fantasy pervades the thought and imagery of the book, as in a fable where things are to be taken, not ocularly and tangibly, but with the traditional "grain of salt." This recourse to the "grain of salt," as a defense or demurrer, is a common subterfuge with Hawthorne, when he is not quite able to believe himself,—as if he were telling stories to children. The most singular instance of this failure of faith in his own imagination is about to be given; but this sort of doubt in what he is saying seems temperamental. The touch of fantasy, like a play of madness or fever, is constantly felt in the progress of the fates of the three main actors. There is something in the tale that

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seems to denaturalize life itself, alike in child and mother, and in the lovers,—here is a world truly out of tune. Fantasy, naturally, springs from an unhinged or faltering mind. It easily takes form in Pearl's figure and actions; but that is, after all, a half-unconscious mirroring of Hester's mind. In the wandering mind of the minister it has a more fatal career. "Why does he keep his hand over his heart?" is little Pearl's constant question. The sense of silence round his thoughts, of an unpenetrated reserve, is only deepened by the hound-like watchfulness of the physician, who has crept into his confidence, to spy out his secret. Once or twice, indeed, Hawthorne discloses the thoughts in the minister's heart, but the sense of the dual punishment of the secret and the known sinner is well preserved in a balanced contrast, till the moment of open discovery is to come. The difficulty is to tell of secret things, things alike unseen and unsaid,—and it is by fantasy that Hawthorne finds the way out.

The finest, and perhaps the greatest scene, in the sense of that tableau which Hawthorne was accustomed to stage, is really preparatory to the denouement,—the scene of the minister's midnight vigil on the same platform where Hester suffered her public exposure at the opening of the tale. With a certain skill all the leading characters are introduced, though some unbeknown to themselves, in the scene, which has the effect of a drama on the stage, such as Richard's dream before the battle, on Bosworth

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field; but the center and climax of the situation is the sin breaking its secrecy in the minister's breast and blazing forth to all the world, though this publicity is, in fact, only symbolically achieved in the episode, notwithstanding the passing figures. The open confession is another matter.

"Walking in the shadow of a dream, as it were, and perhaps actually under the influence of a species of somnambulism, Mr. Dimmesdale reached the spot where, now so long since, Hester Prynne had lived through her first hours of public ignominy. The same platform or scaffold, black and weather-stained with the storm or sunshine of seven long years, and foot-worn, too, with the tread of many culprits who had since ascended it, remained standing beneath the balcony of the meeting-house. The minister went up the steps.

"It was an obscure night of early May. An unvaried pall of cloud muffled the whole expanse of sky from zenith to horizon. If the same multitude which had stood as eye-witnesses while Hester Prynne sustained her punishment could now have been summoned forth, they would have discerned no face above the platform, nor hardly the outline of a human shape, in the dark gray of the midnight. But the town was all asleep. There was no peril of discovery. The minister might stand there, if it so pleased him, until morning should redden in the east, without other risk than that the dank and chill night-

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air would creep into his frame, and stiffen his joints with rheumatism, and clog his throat with catarrh and cough; thereby defrauding the expectant audience of to-morrow's prayer and sermon. No eye could see him, save that ever-wakeful one which had seen him in his closet, wielding the bloody scourge. Why, then, had he come hither? Was it but the mockery of penitence? A mockery, indeed, but in which his soul trifled with itself! A mockery at which angels blushed and wept, while fiends rejoiced, with jeering laughter! He had been driven hither by the impulse of that Remorse which dogged him everywhere, and whose own sister and closely linked companion was that Cowardice which invariably drew him back, with her tremulous gripe, just when the other impulse had hurried him to the verge of a disclosure. Poor, miserable man! what right had infirmity like his to burden itself with crime? Crime is for the iron-nerved, who have their choice either to endure it, or, if it press too hard, to exert their fierce and savage strength for a good purpose, and fling it off at once! This feeble and most sensitive of spirits could do neither, yet continually did one thing or another, which intertwined, in the same inextricable knot, the agony of heaven-defying guilt and vain repentance.

"And thus, while standing on the scaffold, in this vain show of expiation, Mr. Dimmesdale was overcome with a great horror of mind, as if the universe were gazing at a scarlet token on his naked breast,

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right over his heart. On that spot, in very truth, there was, and there had long been, the gnawing and poisonous tooth of bodily pain. Without any effort of his will, or power to restrain himself, he shrieked aloud; an outcry that went pealing through the night, and was beaten back from one house to another, and reverberated from the hills in the background; as if a company of devils, detecting so much misery and terror in it, had made a plaything of the sound, and were bandying it to and fro."

Little by little the night-scene develops, with the death of a colonial magnate and the natural passing to and fro of the physician and the watchers and the old clergyman in the dark street before the eyes of the minister on the platform, whose spirit is darkened and mind unhinged by hysterical thoughts. Physical hysteria, indeed, was evidently his state, and to his own involuntary "great peal of laughter" came the response of a "light, airy, childish laugh."

" 'Pearl! Little Pearl!' cried he after a moment's pause; then, suppressing his voice,—'Hester! Hester Prynne! Are you there?'

" 'Yes; it is Hester Prynne!' she replied, in a tone of surprise; and the minister heard her footsteps approaching from the sidewalk, along which she had been passing. 'It is I, and my little Pearl.'

" 'Whence come you, Hester?' asked the minister. 'What sent you hither?'

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" 'I have been watching at a death-bed,' answered Hester Prynne,—'at Governor Winthrop's death-bed, and have taken his measure for a robe, and am now going homeward to my dwelling.'

" 'Come up hither, Hester, thou and little Pearl,' said the Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale. 'Ye have both been here before, but I was not with you. Come up hither once again, and we will stand all three together!'

"She silently ascended the steps, and stood on the platform, holding little Pearl by the hand. The minister felt for the child's other hand, and took it. The moment that he did so, there came what seemed a tumultuous rush of new life, other life than his own, pouring like a torrent into his heart, and hurrying through all his veins, as if the mother and the child were communicating their vital warmth to his half-torpid system. The three formed an electric chain.

" 'Minister!' whispered little Pearl.

" 'What wouldst thou say, child?' asked Mr. Dimmesdale.

" 'Wilt thou stand here with mother and me, tomorrow noontide?' inquired Pearl.

" 'Nay; not so, my little Pearl,' answered the minister; for with the new energy of the moment, all the dread of public exposure, that had so long been the anguish of his life, had returned upon him; and he was already trembling at the conjunction in which—with a strange joy, nevertheless—he now

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found himself. 'Not so, my child. I shall, indeed, stand with thy mother and thee, one other day, but not to-morrow.'

"Pearl laughed, and attempted to pull away her hand. But the minister held it fast.

" 'A moment longer, my child!' said he.

" 'But wilt thou promise,' asked Pearl, 'to take my hand and mother's hand, to-morrow noontide?'

" 'Not then, Pearl,' said the minister, 'but another time.'

" 'And what other time?' persisted the child.

" 'At the great judgment day,' whispered the minister,—and, strangely enough, the sense that he was a professional teacher of the truth impelled him to answer the child so. 'Then, and there, before the judgment-seat, thy mother, and thou, and I must stand together. But the daylight of this world shall not see our meeting!'

"Pearl laughed again.

"But before Mr. Dimmesdale had done speaking, a light gleamed far and wide over all the muffled sky. It was doubtless caused by one of those meteors, which the night-watcher may so often observe, burning out to waste, in the vacant regions of the atmosphere. So powerful was its radiance, that it thoroughly illuminated the dense medium of cloud betwixt the sky and earth. The great vault brightened, like the dome of an immense lamp. It showed the familiar scene of the street, with the distinctness of mid-day, but also with the awfulness that is al-

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ways imparted to familiar objects by an unaccustomed light. The wooden houses, with their jutting stories and quaint gable-peaks; the doorsteps and thresholds, with the early grass springing up about them; the garden-plots, black with freshly-turned earth; the wheel-track, little worn, and, even in the market-place, margined with green on either side,—all were visible, but with a singularity of aspect that seemed to give another moral interpretation to the things of this world than they had ever borne before. And there stood the minister, with his hand over his heart; and Hester Prynne, with the embroidered letter glimmering on her bosom; and little Pearl, herself a symbol, and the connecting link between those two. They stood in the noon of that strange and solemn splendor, as if it were the light that is to reveal all secrets, and the daybreak that shall unite all who belong to one another.

"There was witchcraft in little Pearl's eyes, and her face, as she glanced upward at the minister, wore that naughty smile which made its expression frequently so elfish. She withdrew her hand from Mr. Dimmesdale's, and pointed across the street. But he clasped both his hands over his breast, and cast his eyes towards the zenith.

. . . . . .

"We impute it, therefore, solely to the disease in his own eye and heart, that the minister, looking upward to the zenith, beheld there the appearance of

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an immense letter,—the letter A,—marked out in lines of dull red light. Not but the meteor may have shown itself at that point, burning duskily through a veil of cloud; but with no such shape as his guilty imagination gave it; or, at least, with so little definiteness, that another's guilt might have seen another symbol in it."

The wavering of Hawthorne's faith in his own imagination is a curious thing, and to a certain extent it infuses an element of weakness into his work, inasmuch as one begins to doubt if the author himself quite believes in the truth of his own tale. Did it matter whether the script flaming in the sky was the letter A or not? It was so that the minister saw it; and the truth was what he saw, whether imaginary or real. The actual phenomenon may have been one thing or another,—it is unconcerning and immaterial: the ideal truth, the abstract truth, the living truth was what the minister saw. The "air-drawn dagger" of Macbeth was such a reality. To question the ocular evidence in such a case is to deny the very nature of that ideal world in which the imagination abides, and to confound the actual world with it. The two are apart and incommensurable. The truth is that Hawthorne, in subjection to the thoughts of his time, regarded the supernatural as something real indeed, but to be rationally explained and thus taken out of the category of the miraculous. The earlier effort of romancers before him had been to

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explain the miraculous by mechanical or equally obvious means of intentional deception, as mere ghost-tricks of one or another sort. Hawthorne, with a more subtle understanding and a finer hand, would explain the marvelous or mysterious by the psychology of the persons involved. He was fascinated by the mysterious in any of its many forms; he was accustomed to deal in mystery, from the crude supernaturalism of witchcraft in the forest to the extravaganzas and refinements of fantasy; but he was ill at ease with old beliefs, and he wished to explain them by a rationalism that belonged to his own time. The psychological solution of the matter was at hand, and he utilized it: there was a lightning flash, and, given the state of the minister's mind, he may have *thought he saw* the letter A blazing out his secret sin in heaven. The curious thing is that Hawthorne should have deemed it necessary to give any explanation or to have warned his readers to suspend their judgment as to the actual facts of the case.

This reserve of Hawthorne in crediting his own story is still more remarkable when he comes to the central fact and climax of it all, so far as the minister is concerned. It is plain that the scene for which the last extract is preparatory, is at hand. The tragic reversal, to be precise, is due,—in fact, has already occurred symbolically by the portent in the sky. The opposition in the tale between Hester's shame and the minister's secret sin is about to be

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dissolved. The tragic reversal is fully accomplished when his breast is bared with the stigma stamped upon it in the flesh, and he stands confessed her lover on the same platform with her. Yet even here, at the climax of fate and when the logic of the tale is plain and convincing, Hawthorne implies much question as to the reality of the stigma bitten into the minister's long-hidden bosom. Did he believe his own tale? one involuntarily asks: or did he sympathize with modern incredulity so far that he felt obliged to admit explanations, at least, as of miracles. The fact of such a stigma as a phenomenon, however caused, has been repeatedly avouched, and is often attributed to the working of the mind on the body in moments or moods of intensity. Whatever was Hawthorne's motive, it must be allowed that, at any rate, his explanation,—that is, his explaining away or permitting a doubt to intrude as to the actual facts—of the letter in the sky and on the minister's breast lies outside the story; for the story, to be whole and sound in imagination, requires them to be real.

The history of the letter, which has been followed closely so far in the lives of the mother, the child and the lover with its so varying fortunes, as it gathered up and gave expression to their tortured lives, ends with the public self-exposure of the minister. The physician who is a mere observer and accomplice, as it were, of the letter in the punishment, needs little comment, beyond the point that the pur-

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suit of revenge left its physical tokens of degeneracy on him in his face and appearance. Punishment of a sort he received for his part, both willing and unwilling, in the tangled fates of the little group, where he was the hater, and thought himself the avenger. Vengeance was worked out under his eyes, indeed, but it did not come from him. His part really seems superfluous, for one is told rather than sees how he plays with the minister's inner life and secrecy.

It has been observed that Hawthorne in this tale worked under an extraordinary difficulty in finding outward expression for the inward spiritual life of the unhappy pair of lovers under their punishment, either of open shame or secret remorse. He sought to tell the story, as it were, in a visible language, by means of the Scarlet Letter, the secret stigma, and the writing on the physician's face and figure. The last is made most plain in the midnight scene, when the lightning illuminated the sky and earth:

"The minister appeared to see him [the physician], with the same glance that discerned the miraculous letter. To his features, as to all other objects, the meteoric light imparted a new expression; or it might well be that the physician was not so careful then, as at all other times, to hide the malevolence with which he looked upon his victim. Certainly, if the meteor kindled up the sky, and disclosed the earth, with an awfulness that admonished

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Hester Prynne and the clergyman of the day of judgment, then might Roger Chillingworth have passed with them for the arch-fiend, standing there with a smile and scowl, to claim his own. So vivid was the expression, or so intense the minister's reception of it, that it seemed still to remain painted in the darkness, after the meteor had vanished, with an effect as if the street and all things else were at once annihilated."

This writing of all secret things of the soul's experiences and changes in visible lineaments, as it were, pervades the method of the narrative, and proceeds from the vivid imaginative force of Hawthorne's genius, which habitually worked with visualizing power. He seems to have been dependent to an unusual degree on his visualizing power to bring home the reality of things. The trait was perhaps connected with his rare powers of observation. At all events, the absorption of his mind in the physical object and his loading and reloading it with significance and suggestion tend to overcharge the material elements of the tale, in comparison with its spiritual substance; the letter, itself, tends to take the place alike of sin and punishment. One follows its history as a separate evil thing that has its victims in its power. But of the actual state of the bosoms of these characters, that the letter symbolizes in various forms, what is really told? What repentance was there in the breasts of either? What

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was their after-thought of their great passion? There is only the one startling sentence of Hester, that throws a light more penetrating than the fire in heaven upon them:

"'Never, never!' whispered she. 'What we did had a consecration of its own. We felt it so! We said so to each other! Hast thou forgotten it?'"

Few words; but none are more humanly significant in the whole story. How little after all Hawthorne's method achieved in unfolding the secrets of the soul's experience! Some of the ways of its torturing thoughts are illustrated, some of their issues and expedients; but of the silent lives of Hester and her lover in themselves, is anything really revealed? Was the physical image of the Scarlet Letter capable of holding and releasing the story, or did it fail, partly because it drew the story down into a world of interpretation through physical symbols, not of the soul's region, and weakened, besides, by Hawthorne's own incredulity in them?

The Scarlet Letter is a tale of doomed lives without escape, and one looks on at the tragedy as at a play of fate. But the true inevitability of fate, that makes the sweep and force of great tragedy, is not in the play, as it develops before the eye. Plain as the situation of each of the characters is, the characters themselves are not made known, and especially is this true of Hester and her lover. Hester

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seems a greater character than belonged to that little world of the Puritan colony, and her womanly nature is never given its range, while her lover, though infinitely weaker in fiber, has no career developing his own individuality; he appears only as the slave of his profession, and, if she was of a larger, he was of a smaller type than belonged to their environment. All that appears in the human story is a tangle of fatal events. The moral lesson, if that be sought, is hard and dark. The kindly elements of life, its self-healing power, the ways of absolution are excluded, as if they were not. Pearl, the child, is the child of the Scarlet Letter only: she scarcely seems her mother's child. There is an arbitrariness in the tale, as of a sentence sealed and delivered, to be carried out. It strikes one, not with the inevitability of great art grounded in human character and the nature of this world, but as the history of the sentence of a court.

Fantasy, which is a kind of wild imagination, had a large career in the literature of the early nineteenth century. Perhaps it was most obvious, poetically, in Coleridge, but it sprang up, like a tender herb, everywhere, in prose and verse, abroad and at home. To speak vaguely, it was of the temperament of the times. In Hawthorne's genius it was omnipotent and pervasive, a form of wandering thought that put forth where it would on any page. It blossomed in unexpected places, with a random and uncontrolled movement that showed its natural sponta-

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neity. Sometimes it took possession of an image or an idea, like an elfish spirit of art, and moulded out of it gargoyles of expression, as it were, transitory suggestions and intimations. Hawthorne's thoughts are full of such singularities. The true imagination, the rational imagination, relaxes its rigor, and in its place come reverie and dream, the half-perceived, the divined, the mere play of the wakeful brain. If then, the image or idea, already fantastic in its birth, is given a free course to develop itself, without the interference of the rational element, strange works of art result, oftentimes original in form and mysterious in content. The physical image, as Hawthorne conceived it, had a touch of such fantasy, and to what an extent it developed in the case of the Scarlet Letter has just been illustrated. Such an image tends to escape from its creator and develop its own life. It is because Hawthorne feels the image breaking away from him that he questions its reality at the moments of climax in the minister's history. Fantasy had carried Hawthorne further than, as a rationalist, he felt justified in going.

But a deeper truth of art lies in the matter. It has been noticed that Hawthorne gives the double impression of "managing" his characters, at times, or specifically in the case of Pearl, and of a certain arbitrariness in the general plot, as of a thing whose course and issue were agreed upon and determined in advance. In harmony with this, it is to be observed that artifice is the natural accomplice of fan-

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tasy, in art, because the fantastic by its very nature is easily subject to change, being uncontrolled by any inner law of its structure as rational imagination is controlled. The master of fantasy and the fantastic in American poetry is Poe; and it has often been alleged that artifice is the breath of his genius. So extreme a charge is unjust, even when he lends color to it himself; but this much is true, that artifice is the temptation of the artist of the fantastic, if for a moment his genius fails. The large element of fantasy in Hawthorne's imagination is obvious to his readers; the check upon his acceptance of it, in working out his stories as true narratives of facts, is equally plain; and the manipulation of the various parts of the tales, by reduplication and echo and like devices, is an example of the sort of artifice that he consciously resorted to. The ingenuity of his construction and development of theme in fiction recall the same marked quality in Poe's genius, and it is at least curious that fantasy was a chief ingredient in the imagination of both. In the case of both, their works, at times, seem rather made than grown, and yet, at times, have a vitality of their own. Fantasy, like true imagination, has its own principle of life.

Hawthorne's art in *The Scarlet Letter,* it must be borne in mind, was something quite different from his material. The material was moral, and hence noble; the art was fantastic; the content was abstract. The whole work was thus strangely com-

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posite. The Puritan setting of the scene was simple and dignified, and passes before the eye like the scenes of a play with fit backgrounds and properties; but on that quasi-religious stage the movement and color and tone seem almost operatic, and the landscapes, groups and tableaux a performance of foreign opera. The Scarlet Letter itself is a brilliant focus for all the meaning of the tale; and as it comes again and again in the child and in the sky and on the minister's breast, it varies without changing the central theme, till it dies out in the fatal climax and collapse of the drama. Hester, herself, seems an operatic character, sole and simple in eminence, and Pearl an operatic child. Fantasy, more than reality, envelops the scene. The suffering after the sin ennobles the theme with moral grandeur. The abstract element,—namely, that this is a story, not of individuals, but of the fatal penalties of violated law working out its nature in the human breast,—is felt from the rise to the fall of the curtain. But the art by which this is rendered is not, one feels, quite dramatic or operatic; it is something more original and idiosyncratic, peculiar, indeed, to Hawthorne,—Hawthornesque; the art of a fantastic imagination, ingenious in its methods, somewhat skeptical of its own vision, somber in meditation, brooding on sin after the fashion of old New England.

Any art, literary or other, is, to a certain extent, shut within its own age, and can be thoroughly understood in all its tones and shades, and will seem

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wholly natural, only to the spirit of that age. The world's greatest works, works of universal art, alone escape this limitation. *The Scarlet Letter,* though it has aspects of universal meaning, is essentially a provincial romance; it requires a contemporary of Hawthorne for its most sympathetic and understanding reader. Its peculiar fantasy will come natural, indeed, only to one habituated to the tone of the literature of that time; too often it will seem whimsical, odd, individualistic. Other writers of the age, however, had such a fashion of thought and expression. Contemporaneity is, perhaps, still more marked in that vein of sentimentality, from which few American writers were wholly free in the first half of the century, and which is occasionally to be observed in Hawthorne's juvenile and slighter work. The early years of Lowell, even, were subject to it, and it had its peculiar and forgotten memorials among the books and reputations of that truly literary age. The traits of the time as a period, independent of persons, have never been made out in our history; but, when this shall be done, it will be found that both fantasy and sentimentality were dominant in that generation. The age read, as well as created its literature, with its own eyes; and in particular, in the case of the Puritan romance, it had a preconceived notion of Puritanism, derived from its own tradition and reactions thereon, to which it instinctively required any imaginative account of it to conform. It may be doubted whether

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the eminent Puritan worthies would have found the romance a faithful and illuminating record of their little state, but it certainly represented what the seventh or eighth generation in New England wished to believe of their founders. In other words, the romance is not an original product of the Puritan age, but a history written long after the facts, in consonance with later notions. It made its appeal to a generation of harsh judgment, as regards the Puritan state, that found the hard and dark elements in the tale agreeable to their view of that older life; and the kind of art employed, with its touches of fantasy and sentiment, was one that might almost be called native to the community.

The thoughtful reader, too, can not fail to wonder to what an extent Hawthorne was actually interested in the moral problems that are the heart of the mystery in the tale. Artist that he was and capable, as has been seen, of great indifference to mortal concerns, was he attracted only by the vivid and condensed story, and less concerned with the inner spiritual histories and moralities? The attraction of the general theme, the motifs of the secrets of the bosom, solitary guilt and hypocrisy, the habit of his mind to brood on the darker aspects of man's moral life would seem to certify that he had a real rather than a purely artistic interest in the spiritual history of the Puritan outcasts. This may readily be granted. As an artist, indeed, he found a solution of the plots in the tragic reversal, bringing about the

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minister's confession and public exposure; but, as a moralist, he found no solution, inasmuch as the confession left things very much as they were, with no visible absolution or forgiveness. The sin is represented as irreparable; the broken order of life is in no sense restored. There is nothing left at the end but a pitiful tale of mortal frailty, and its issues. It is this impotence of the moralist to bring his tale to a conclusion, as the artist had done, which makes the discord at the close. One feels that Hawthorne was more competent in art than in meditation; and this sustains the impression that comes from many sides, alike of his work and of his nature, that he was, primarily, an artist in all his career. This, however, does not at all impeach the reality, and indeed the depth, of his interest in the moral material, which is the true substance of all his work.

It must be plain, from the tenor of these observations that the contemporaneity of his own time entered into Hawthorne's great Puritan romance, both in art and thought, to a degree that differentiates it from works of ideal art, truly independent of time and place. It is engaged in the literary and moral fashions of its times, and so shot through with the temperament of old New England as Hawthorne knew it, as to make the modern reader not wholly sympathetic with either the substance or the manner of the tale; it must strike him, in many ways, as old-fashioned. Universal as the theme is, it is given in a strictly New England view, and is colored by

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ways of feeling and expression that belong to a past age. It is not characteristically, but only historically, an American tale; truly speaking, both by its origin and its manner, it is purely of New England. The isolation of the scene, the condensation of the motif, the great abstractness of the content, which are all somewhat dependent on the strong use made of symbolism by means of the letter, give an appearance of universal art, but on a closer examination it proves to be less an expression of the general heart of man than a product of a local environment. *The Scarlet Letter* is the chief monument that the New England literary age left behind it in fiction. It is the ornament of a small though flourishing literature, and the fruit, in its idea, of a peculiar religious society in a remote quarter of a sparsely inhabited world; it belongs by both these traits to the provincial in literature, and the more it is examined, the more evident is the texture of contemporaneity and locality in it.

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CHAPTER VI

THE NEW ENGLANDER ABROAD

IT was the lot of this New Englander to go abroad, —not merely to England, which was but a change of homes, as from county to county, Berkshire to Essex,—but to another and different world, to Italy. Hawthorne is our chief example of the picturesque early American tourist. Irving, indeed, had viewed Spain, and Bayard Taylor tramped the Orient; but Italy came fresh from Hawthorne's pen. His nature was predisposed to the experience by virtue of that predilection for artistic things, which has already been commented on as evinced almost from the beginning of his career, and by a certain amateurish interest in portraits and carving and artistic handiwork of various sorts, noticeable throughout his writings. To such an observant eye, and to a mind so stored with sentiment and imagination, Italy became at once an environment as close as his own Berkshire hills or Essex woods; he wrote about it with the same minuteness and precision of object and outline, as to the external scene, and he caught its atmosphere of classic myth or medieval aspect or simple, idyllic, momentary charm as naturally as if they were only a new variety of the mosses about

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his own Old Manse. His note-books show how his senses became filled with Italy as in those days it came first to the eyes of the sentimental and faithful tourist; and it is this vision,—for it can scarcely be called less,—that he spread before his old readers in *The Marble Faun,* with its gardens, its galleries and churches and squares, Monte Beni with its "sunshine" wine, the golden atmosphere of the hills, the frolic of the carnival, and the thousand minute Italian touches that make up the ground of that pictured story. The environment is all Italian, as he had eyes to see it, as in his earlier tales it had been all New England. The scene is really separate from the tale, however closely inwoven the latter seems, like figures in a tapestry; but the history that is displayed on this background and runs in and out of the landscape scenes, is a pure New England fable.

It is needful to draw sharply the distinction between the moral tale, with the general type of which the reader of Hawthorne is already acquainted, and the fascination of the Italian scene in which it is set. They are opposed very much as the ancestral curse in *The House of the Seven Gables* is relieved against the manners and customs and aspects of old Salem. Rome is the scene of the play; but the theater is as interesting as the drama, to say the least; perhaps, in the issue, it is more so. The story, then, which must be the chief thing in a novel, is after Hawthorne's well-established make. The characters

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are few,—substantially only four, Donatello, Miriam, Hilda and Kenyon, the first three sharply contrasted, the last of a neutral tint and hardly more than a convenience in the narrative. Hawthorne takes no marked interest in them as persons, though he displays more feeling for Donatello's youth than is customary with him. There is, perhaps, here a reflection of the impression made upon him by an Italian trait,—that southern gaiety of spirit, unknown to northern temperaments. However, he was as little concerned to tell anything of the after-life of Donatello as he was to speak clearly of the earlier life of Miriam; he was indifferent to their personal fortunes. His interest, quite as plainly as in *The Scarlet Letter,* is restricted to the abstract element in the tale, namely, its moral truth. How did their careers illustrate this, and make it evident, is all his question. Miriam is a woman with an unknown past, and acquainted with evil, though under what form is not told; Donatello is a type of natural innocence, brought in contact with her by his love and so led to an impulsive crime in her behalf; his crime, felt to be sin, results in such spiritual development that it can only be described by saying his soul was born thereby. The birth of the soul through sin is the moral theme; the scene is staged for it; the plot is made for it; the characters fulfil their part in merely illustrating it. This being the end in view, the characters are suppressed, except so far as they advance it.

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What has hitherto been designated the economy of Hawthorne's art is shown, not only in this restriction of the characters, but by the elimination of action, both of which were customary marks of his manner. The act which is central and capital in the plot is the least of an act possible, in the circumstances; though it is nothing less than murder, it occupies but a brief space, a moment, of the tale, and though it was the climax of Miriam's former and darker life, it is substantially unexplained. The impulse, which led Donatello to do the deed by a sudden seizure of emotion, seems disconnected with any facts of that interior tragedy, whatever its nature. The act, once done, appears wholly severed from its circumstances; it is not a particular crime, with a history and explanation of its own, but a sin,—sin in the abstract. Any other crime would have served the purpose; what was essential to the story was the destruction of Donatello's innocence. The situation is not so different to that of *The Scarlet Letter,* where there is a like indifference to the element of action. There the sin was previous to the opening of the scene, here it is a part of the narrative, but in either case it is a fact presupposed by the story, an hypothesis given; the interest in both is not in the action, but in the suffering. The action, in other words, like the characters, is subordinated to the moral thesis, which is, again, the main subject of meditation,—the history of the soul in sin; and the method, by which Hawthorne discloses this his-

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tory, is not by action, but by portraying in indirect ways states of the soul. The physical image, however, which had served him so long as an interpreter of moral phenomena, had now exhausted its powers, at least in its original form of a clear and definite object in which significance could be concentrated and reinforced by various devices. A relic of it remains in the pointed ears of the Faun, hesitatingly ascribed to Donatello, as the sign and symbol of his ancestral heritage of a state of nature which his mortal sin disturbed; but it is only a relic and survival of the earlier manner, and plays no serious part in the new tale.

The intent of the story is plain. It is a meditation on the effects of sin on a state of nature, on that simple innocence which, legends tell, filled the Arcadian world before

"disproportioned sin
Broke the fair music that all creatures made."

Donatello is an inhabitant, a "strayed reveller," as it were, from that virgin and paradisiacal region. He is snared in the earthly curse; and the tale is of his transformation into a different being, a spiritual being, whose experience of sin had made him human by developing in him the sorrowful but intelligent soul that is characteristic of humanity. This is a higher state, in the hierarchy of being, it would appear, than the primeval mountain innocence he had known in his youth. But the matter is perplexing.

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For one thing, clearly this new Fall of Man is substantially a rise in spiritual grade. The conception of sin as a means of grace is, in a sense, paradoxical. Hawthorne must have felt the black drop in this philosophy. At all events, here, no less than in *The Scarlet Letter,* he told a tale of doomed lives for which there is no issue; Donatello and Miriam go to their unknown fate, at the end, in great mystery, but if Kenyon's parting address to them—a perfectly correct little sermon from the New England standpoint—is any indication of what was in store for their mortal fate, there was to be only a secondary and tempered happiness for them, if any. The difficulty seems to be that Hawthorne was better aware of the ways into tragedy than of the ways that lead out. At all events, whatever his flashes of knowledge, or intuition, of the maladies of the soul, his spiritual solutions are unsatisfactory. They are, in fact, no solutions; they end in closed ways, over which he drops a veil.

The difficulty, implicit in his artistic methods, of representing the states of the soul, which he desires to express, is the same here as in the earlier romance of sin in soul. In the absence of such a symbol as the Scarlet Letter, he resorts to many physical images, instead of one, which serve him as so many mirrors of unspoken thoughts or distant events; and he uses myth and fancy to reduplicate the themes and moods that are dominant in the play of his imagination. The scene of the drawings and sketches,

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the introduction of the figures of St. Michael and the Cenci, the myth of the fountain nymph and her knightly lover illustrate this reverberation of idea and emotion from episode to episode through the unfolding stages of the narrative; in essence, though superficially different, it is the same method as that employed in the Puritan tale by the repeated emergence of the Scarlet Letter on its various backgrounds. The sense of the blood-stain, the touch of pollution, the loss of purity are made, though only in consciousness, the outward and visible sign of the change wrought in Donatello; his suffering in his new moodiness is plain; but, when the most has been done to externalize and give color and form to his spiritual history, the legend of the birth of the soul remains obscure. He had become aware of dark and terrible elements in the world and of strange and ill-understood reactions within him in response to experiences he had blindly encountered,—this is all that is told of the matter. It seems inadequate for such a history as was seemingly undertaken.

The assumption of the myth of the world before sin, the Rousseau-like state of nature, the prehuman, faun-and-nymph world, is easily made in that land of classical fragments and visible joy; and Hawthorne describes it with his New England pen of light fantasy and wild nature. The forest of the new world had prepared his heart for it. The scene of the murder breaks in on this sunny landscape,—a midnight scene in ruins. It is a chapter of theatrical

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romance, by itself, and seems like an extract from an old, so-called "Gothic" tale. Then comes the long and delaying after-play of fate, in the slow and dumb torture of the nascent soul, surprised in its birth by the rising and hostile shapes of sorrow. Perhaps the most vivid moment, the most condensed form of the transformation of Donatello, is when he makes trial of his boyhood power of confident converse with the creatures of the wood, and finds that the old spell that made him a friend of the wild and innocent world, is gone. What is evident in all this is the intent of the moral tale; but what charms is the scene, whether it be the sylvan dance in the gardens, the tragic Tarpeian rock at midnight, or the Italian burst of wild weeping over the passing of youth.

The three episodes characterize the stages of the tale. The first is a glade of Eden before the entrance of the serpent, and is, perhaps, in feature and atmosphere, the gayest passage in Hawthorne's album of old-fashioned fancies. It is almost a reverie, so still and dreamlike is the motion, so pictorial in effect that it issues naturally, and by unobserved transition, in the marble dance of the sarcophagus, with its tragic suggestion of change and fate,—till all is dissipated, and the scene is brought back to reality with the forward leap of the demon of the play, "the model," into the living group:

"Donatello, brisk and cheerful as he seemed be-

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fore, showed a sensibility to Miriam's gladdened mood by breaking into still wilder and ever-varying activity. He frisked around her, bubbling over with joy, which clothed itself in words that had little individual meaning, and in snatches of song that seemed as natural as bird-notes. Then they both laughed together, and heard their own laughter returning the echoes, and laughed again at the response, so that the ancient and solemn grove became full of merriment for these two blithe spirits. A bird happening to sing cheerily, Donatello gave a peculiar call, and the little feathered creature came fluttering about his head, as if it had known him through many summers.

"'How close he stands to nature!' said Miriam, observing this pleasant familiarity between her companion and the bird. 'He shall make me as natural as himself for this one hour.' . . .

"So the shadowy Miriam almost outdid Donatello on his own ground. They ran races with each other, side by side, with shouts and laughter; they pelted one another with early flowers, and gathering them up twined them with green leaves into garlands for both their heads. They played together like children, or creatures of immortal youth. So much had they flung aside the sombre habitudes of daily life, that they seemed born to be sportive forever, and endowed with eternal mirthfulness instead of any deeper joy. It was a glimpse far backward into Arcadian life, or, further still, into the Golden

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Age, before mankind was burdened with sin and sorrow, and before pleasure had been darkened with those shadows that bring it into high relief, and make it happiness.

"'Hark!' cried Donatello, stopping short, as he was about to bind Miriam's fair hands with flowers, and lead her along in triumph, 'there is music somewhere in the grove!'

"'It is your kinsman, Pan, most likely,' said Miriam, 'playing on his pipe. Let us go seek him, and make him puff out his rough cheeks and pipe his merriest air! Come; the strain of music will guide us onward like a gaily colored thread of silk.'

"'Or like a chain of flowers,' responded Donatello, drawing her along by that which he had twined. 'This way!—Come!'

"As the music came fresher on their ears, they danced to its cadence, extemporizing new steps and attitudes. Each varying movement had a grace which might have been worth putting into marble, for the long delight of days to come, but vanished with the movement that gave it birth, and was effaced from memory by another. In Miriam's motion, freely as she flung herself into the frolic of the hour, there was still an artful beauty; in Donatello's there was a charm of indescribable grotesqueness hand in hand with grace; sweet, bewitching, most provocative of laughter, and yet akin to pathos, so deeply did it touch the heart. This was the ultimate

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peculiarity, the final touch, distinguishing between the sylvan creature and the beautiful companion at his side. Setting apart only this, Miriam resembled a Nymph, as much as Donatello did a Faun.

"There were flitting moments, indeed, when she played the sylvan character as perfectly as he. Catching glimpses of her, then, you would have fancied that an oak had sundered its rough bark to let her dance freely forth, endowed with the same spirit in her human form as that which rustles in the leaves; or that she had emerged through the pebbly bottom of a fountain, a water-nymph, to play and sparkle in the sunshine, flinging a quivering light around her, and suddenly disappearing in a shower of rainbow drops.

"As the fountain sometimes subsides into its basin, so in Miriam there were symptoms that the frolic of her spirits would at last tire itself out.

"'Ah! Donatello,' cried she, laughing, as she stopped to take breath; 'you have an unfair advantage over me! I am no true creature of the woods; while you are a real Faun, I do believe. When your curls shook just now, methought I had a peep at the pointed ears.'

"Donatello snapped his fingers above his head, as fauns and satyrs taught us first to do, and seemed to radiate jollity out of his whole nimble person. Nevertheless, there was a kind of dim apprehension in his face, as if he dreaded that a moment's pause might

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break the spell, and snatch away the sportive companion whom he had waited for through so many dreary months.

" 'Dance! dance!' cried he, joyously. 'If we take breath, we shall be as we were yesterday. There, now, is the music, just beyond this clump of trees. Dance, Miriam, dance!'

"They had now reached an open, grassy glade (of which there are many in that artfully constructed wilderness), set round with stone seats, on which the aged moss had kindly essayed to spread itself instead of cushions. On one of the stone benches sat the musicians, whose strains had enticed our wild couple thitherward. They proved to be a vagrant band, such as Rome, and all Italy, abounds with; comprising a harp, a flute, and a violin, which, though greatly the worse for wear, the performers had skill enough to provoke and modulate into tolerable harmony. It chanced to be a feast-day; and, instead of playing in the sun-scorched piazzas of the city, or beneath the windows of some unresponsive palace, they had bethought themselves to try the echoes of these woods; for, on the festas of the Church, Rome scatters its merry-makers all abroad, ripe for the dance or any other pastime.

"As Miriam and Donatello emerged from among the trees, the musicians scraped, tinkled, or blew, each according to his various kind of instrument, more inspiringly than ever. A dark-cheeked little girl, with bright black eyes, stood by, shaking a tam-

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bourine set round with tinkling bells, and thumping it on its parchment head. Without interrupting his brisk, though measured movement, Donatello snatched away this unmelodious contrivance, and flourishing it above his head, produced music of indescribable potency, still dancing with frisky step, and striking the tambourine, and ringing its little bells, all in one jovial act. . . .

"The harper thrummed with rapid fingers; the violin-player flashed his bow back and forth across the strings; the flautist poured his breath in quick puffs of jollity, while Donatello shook the tambourine above his head, and led the merry throng with unweariable steps. As they followed one another in a wild ring of mirth, it seemed the realization of one of those bas-reliefs where a dance of nymphs, satyrs, or bacchanals is twined around the circle of an antique vase; or it was like the sculptured scene on the front and sides of a sarcophagus, where, as often as any other device, a festive procession mocks the ashes and white bones that are treasured up within. You might take it for a marriage-pageant; but after a while, if you look at those merry-makers, following them from end to end of the marble coffin, you doubt whether their gay movement is leading them to a happy close. A youth has suddenly fallen in the dance; a chariot is overturned and broken, flinging the charioteer headlong to the ground; a maiden seems to have grown faint or weary and is drooping on the bosom of a friend. Always some tragic inci-

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dent is shadowed forth or thrust sidelong into the spectacle; and when once it has caught your eye you can look no more at the festal portions of the scene, except with reference to this one slightly suggested doom and sorrow.

"As in its mirth, so in the darker characteristic here alluded to, there was an analogy between the sculptured scene on the sarcophagus and the wild dance which we have been describing. In the midst of its madness and riot Miriam found herself suddenly confronted by a strange figure that shook its fantastic garments in the air, and pranced before her on its tiptoes, almost vying with the agility of Donatello himself. It was the model."

It is impossible to escape a certain feeling of unreality in this scene. It has the artificiality of the stage, or, better, the opera,—of something arranged and made to be looked at. It is too visibly, to use the word hitherto employed, a tableau, a wall-fresco, an echo of the sarcophagus. It is not often that fine art, in the strict sense, moulds the form and expression of literature is so manifest a way. Hawthorne's artistic senses,—his eye for line and shape and light, for grouping and relief, were, no doubt, vividly reinforced by the arts in Italy; he always had a certain taste and tendency toward visible art, as has been observed above; but no small portion of the gaiety and natural high spirits of this scene came from observation and his fresh contacts with life

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itself in Italy in its free and primitive forms. The impression of unreality, as of a picture or bas-relief, is undeniable; but it is no greater than that which invades the mind in reading some of Hawthorne's New England sketches, the insubstantiality of which, when dream or reverie or fantasy seems to control his imagination, has been mentioned. The whole conception of the care-free primitive world in which the faun-like nature of Donatello had its birth and being, and of which the dance is but a symbolic manifestation, is of no stronger woof. It is all an invention of Hawthorne's brain, drawn from the Golden Age, and memories of Tanglewood, and the vision of Italy. Its unreality is its charm.

It must be acknowledged, too, that a kindred unreality pervades the next scene, that of the murder. The act itself, being reduced to the lowest possible terms, occupies but a line or two. The outstanding fact of the situation is not the death, but the passion of the two lovers, first truly known in their moral communion in the crime. The "rage" of Donatello, which "had kindled him into a man" and "had developed within him an intelligence," is briefly dwelt on; but it is the moment after, when Miriam and Donatello drew together, "arm in arm, heart in heart," that is expanded in their consciousness. The exaltation of feeling at this climax of guilt is noticeable, and recalls the much briefer words, already quoted, which denoted the same climax in the earlier case of Hester and the Puritan minister; the later

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lovers, not unlike the former pair, were brought together in "one emotion, and that a kind of rapture," in their embrace; the world seemed annihilated, and they to live in a sphere of their own. This may be correct psychological analysis; violent and unknown emotions disturb the sanity of the universe, as it were, and give rise to spectral scenes; but the movements and the mood of Donatello and Miriam as they emerge from the murder have just the unreality, the nervous tension, of high-strung tragedy. Without meaning to place the two instances on a par, the parallel between "the far-off noise of singing and laughter" of their companions and "the knocking at the gate" in *Macbeth* is obvious; but here one still remains with the murder, inside the gate. The exaltation of feeling in Donatello and Miriam continues; it blends with great Roman memories of imperial tragedy; and it fades out in that strange and terrifying climax of thought and feeling which makes all criminals one kindred.

The touch of fever at such a moment in a tragic story, the note of delirium, the unforeseen motion of thought in the wild whirl of emotion, unnatural and paradoxical as they may seem, are true to a distempered nature; unreality is just the impression that ought to be given. It is not for the purpose, however, of illustrating the ways of literary art that these remarks are made, but rather to show how thoroughgoing is the artistic unreality of this romance, in all its creative facts, as distinguished from

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those that merely reproduce the aspects and things of the actual Italy of Hawthorne's day. The Golden Age and the moral law belong to no period, to no land nor climate. The legend and the tale of Monte Beni lift far away from realism in any form; they were conceived in the pure sphere of the imagination, where "things more real than living man" inhabit; and this trait, wherein the genius of the work consists, is most manifest in such "unrealities" as have been dwelt on in these comments on both the pastoral dance and the tragedy. But behold the tragedy,—before and after!

"Meanwhile Miriam had not noticed the departure of the rest of the company; she remained on the edge of the precipice and Donatello along with her.

" 'It would be a fatal fall, still,' she said to herself, looking over the parapet, and shuddering as her eye measured the depth. 'Yes; surely yes! Even without the weight of an overburdened heart, a human body would fall heavily enough upon those stones to shake all its joints asunder. How soon it would be over!'

"Donatello, of whose presence she was possibly not aware, now pressed closer to her side; and he, too, like Miriam, bent over the low parapet and trembled violently. Yet he seemed to feel that perilous fascination which haunts the brow of precipices, tempting the unwary one to fling himself over for the very horror of the thing, for, after drawing

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hastily back, he again looked down, thrusting himself out farther than before. He then stood silent a brief space, struggling, perhaps, to make himself conscious of the historic associations of the scene.

"'What are you thinking of, Donatello?' asked Miriam.

"'Who are they,' said he, looking earnestly in her face, 'who have been flung over here in days gone by?'

"'Men that cumbered the world,' she replied. 'Men whose lives were the bane of their fellow-creatures. Men who poisoned the air, which is the common breath of all, for their own selfish purposes. There was short work with such men in old Roman times. Just in the moment of their triumph, a hand, as of an avenging giant, clutched them, and dashed the wretches down this precipice.'

"'Was it well done?' asked the young man.

"'It was well done,' answered Miriam; 'innocent persons were saved by the destruction of a guilty one, who deserved his doom.'

"While this brief conversation passed, Donatello had once or twice glanced aside with a watchful air, just as a hound may often be seen to take sidelong note of some suspicious object, while he gives his more direct attention to something nearer at hand. Miriam seemed now first to become aware of the silence that had followed upon the cheerful talk and laughter of a few moments before.

"Looking round, she perceived that all her com-

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pany of merry friends had retired, and Hilda, too, in whose soft and quiet presence she had always an indescribable feeling of security. All gone; and only herself and Donatello left hanging over the brow of the ominous precipice.

"Not so, however; not entirely alone! In the basement wall of the palace, shaded from the moon, there was a deep, empty niche, that had probably once contained a statue; not empty, either; for a figure now came forth from it and approached Miriam. She must have had cause to dread some unspeakable evil from this strange persecutor, and to know that this was the very crisis of her calamity; for, as he drew near, such a cold, sick despair crept over her, that it impeded her breath, and benumbed her natural promptitude of thought. Miriam seemed dreamily to remember falling on her knees; but, in her whole recollection of that wild moment, she beheld herself as in a dim show, and could not well distinguish what was done and suffered; no, not even whether she were really an actor and sufferer in the scene.

"Hilda, meanwhile, had separated herself from the sculptor, and turned back to rejoin her friend. At a distance, she still heard the mirth of her late companions, who were going down the cityward descent of the Capitoline Hill; they had set up a new stave of melody, in which her own soft voice, as well as the powerful sweetness of Miriam's, was sadly missed.

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"The door of the little court-yard had swung upon its hinges, and partly closed itself. Hilda (whose native gentleness pervaded all her movements) was quietly opening it, when she was startled, midway, by the noise of a struggle within, beginning and ending all in one breathless instant. Along with it, or closely succeeding it, was a loud, fearful cry, which quivered upward through the air, and sank quivering downward to the earth. Then, a silence! Poor Hilda had looked into the court-yard, and saw the whole quick passage of a deed, which took but that little time to grave itself in the eternal adamant.

"The door of the court-yard swung slowly, and closed itself of its own accord. Miriam and Donatello were now alone there. She clasped her hands, and looked wildly at the young man, whose form seemed to have dilated, and whose eyes blazed with the fierce energy that had suddenly inspired him. It had kindled him into a man; it had developed within him an intelligence which was no native characteristic of the Donatello whom we have heretofore known. But that simple and joyous creature was gone forever.

" 'What have you done?' said Miriam, in a horror-stricken whisper.

"The glow of rage was still lurid on Donatello's face, and now flashed out again from his eyes.

" 'I did what ought to be done to a traitor!' he replied. 'I did what your eyes bade me do, when I

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asked them with mine, as I held the wretch over the precipice!'

"These last words struck Miriam like a bullet. Could it be so? Had her eyes provoked or assented to this deed? She had not known it. But, alas! looking back into the frenzy and turmoil of the scene just acted, she could not deny—she was not sure whether it might be so, or no—that a wild joy had flamed up in her heart, when she beheld her persecutor in his mortal peril. Was it horror?—or ecstasy?—or both in one? Be the emotion what it might, it had blazed up more madly, when Donatello flung his victim off the cliff, and more and more, while his shriek went quivering downward. With the dead thump upon the stones below had come an unutterable horror.

"'And my eyes bade you do it!' repeated she.

"They both leaned over the parapet, and gazed downward as earnestly as if some inestimable treasure had fallen over, and were yet recoverable. On the pavement, below, was a dark mass, lying in a heap, with little or nothing human in its appearance, except that the hands were stretched out, as if they might have clutched, for a moment, at the small square stones. But there was no motion in them now. Miriam watched the heap of mortality while she could count a hundred, which she took pains to do. No stir; not a finger moved!

"'You have killed him, Donatello! He is quite

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dead!' said she. 'Stone dead! Would I were so, too!'

"'Did you not mean that he should die?' sternly asked Donatello, still in the glow of that intelligence which passion had developed in him. 'There was short time to weigh the matter; but he had his trial in that breath or two while I held him over the cliff, and his sentence in that one glance, when your eyes responded to mine! Say that I have slain him against your will,—say that he died without your whole consent,—and, in another breath, you shall see me lying beside him.'

"'Oh, never!' cried Miriam. 'My one, own friend! Never, never, never!'

"She turned to him,—the guilty, blood-stained, lonely woman,—she turned to her fellow-criminal, the youth, so lately innocent, whom she had drawn into her doom. She pressed him close, close to her bosom, with a clinging embrace that brought their two hearts together, till the horror and agony of each was combined into one emotion, and that a kind of rapture.

"'Yes, Donatello, you speak the truth!' said she; 'my heart consented to what you did. We two slew yonder wretch. The deed knots us together, for time and eternity, like the coil of a serpent!'

"They threw one other glance at the heap of death below, to assure themselves that it was there; so like a dream was the whole thing. Then they turned from that fatal precipice, and came out of

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the court-yard, arm in arm, heart in heart. Instinctively, they were heedful not to sever themselves so much as a pace or two from one another, for fear of the terror and deadly chill that would thenceforth wait for them in solitude. Their deed—the crime which Donatello wrought, and Miriam accepted on the instant—had wreathed itself, as she said, like a serpent, in inextricable links about both their souls, and drew them into one, by its terrible contractile power. It was closer than a marriage-bond. So intimate, in those first moments, was the union, that it seemed as if their new sympathy annihilated all other ties, and that they were released from the chain of humanity; a new sphere, a special law, had been created for them alone. The world could not come near them; they were safe!

"When they reached the flight of steps leading downward from the Capitol, there was a far-off noise of singing and laughter. Swift, indeed, had been the rush of the crisis that was come and gone! This was still the merriment of the party that had so recently been their companions. They recognized the voices which, a little while ago, had accorded and sung in cadence with their own. But they were familiar voices no more; they sounded strangely, and, as it were, out of the depths of space; so remote was all that pertained to the past life of these guilty ones, in the moral seclusion that had suddenly extended itself around them. But how close, and ever closer, did the breath of the immeasurable

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waste, that lay between them and all brotherhood or sisterhood, now press them one within the other!

"'O friend!' cried Miriam, so putting her soul into the word that it took a heavy richness of meaning, and seemed never to have been spoken before,—'O friend, are you conscious, as I am, of this companionship that knits our heart-strings together?'

"'I feel it, Miriam,' said Donatello. 'We draw one breath; we live one life!'

"'Only yesterday,' continued Miriam; 'nay, only a short half-hour ago, I shivered in an icy solitude. No friendship, no sisterhood, could come near enough to keep the warmth within my heart. In an instant, all is changed! There can be no more loneliness!'

"'None, Miriam!' said Donatello.

"'None, my beautiful one!' responded Miriam, gazing in his face, which had taken a higher, almost an heroic aspect, from the strength of passion. 'None, my innocent one! Surely, it is no crime that we have committed. One wretched and worthless life has been sacrificed to cement two other lives for evermore.'

"'For evermore, Miriam!' said Donatello; 'cemented with his blood!'

"The young man started at the word which he had himself spoken; it may be that it brought home, to the simplicity of his imagination, what he had not before dreamed of,—the ever-increasing loathsomeness of a union that consists in guilt. Cemented

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with blood, which would corrupt and grow more noisome forever and forever, but bind them none the less strictly for that.

"'Forget it! Cast it all behind you!' said Miriam, detecting, by her sympathy, the pang that was in his heart. 'The deed has done its office, and has no existence any more.'

"They flung the past behind them, as she counselled, or else distilled from it a fiery intoxication, which sufficed to carry them triumphantly through those first moments of their doom. For, guilt has its moment of rapture, too. The foremost result of a broken law is ever an ecstatic sense of freedom. And thus there exhaled upward (out of their dark sympathy, at the base of which lay a human corpse) a bliss, or an insanity, which the unhappy pair imagined to be well worth the sleepy innocence that was forever lost to them.

"As their spirits rose to the solemn madness of the occasion, they went onward,—not stealthily, not fearfully,—but with a stately gait and aspect. Passion lent them (as it does to meaner shapes) its brief nobility of carriage. They trod through the streets of Rome, as if they, too, were among the majestic and guilty shadows, that, from ages long gone by, have haunted the blood-stained city. And, at Miriam's suggestion, they turned aside, for the sake of treading loftily past the old site of Pompey's Forum.

"'For there was a great deed done here!' she said,—"a deed of blood like ours! Who knows, but we

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may meet the high and ever-sad fraternity of Cæsar's murderers, and exchange a salutation?'

"'Are they our brethren, now?' asked Donatello.

"'Yes; all of them,' said Miriam; 'and many another, whom the world little dreams of, has been made our brother or our sister, by what we have done within this hour!'

"And, at the thought, she shivered. Where, then, was the seclusion, the remoteness, the strange, lonesome Paradise, into which she and her one companion had been transported by their crime? Was there, indeed, no such refuge, but only a crowded thoroughfare and jostling throng of criminals? And was it true, that whatever hand had a blood-stain on it,—or had poured out poison,—or strangled a babe at its birth,—or clutched a grandsire's throat, he sleeping, and robbed him of his few last breaths,—had now the right to offer itself in fellowship with their two hands? Too certainly, that right existed. It is a terrible thought, that an individual wrong-doing melts into the great mass of human crime, and makes us,—who dreamed only of our own little separate sin,—makes us guilty of the whole. And thus Miriam and her lover were not an insulated pair, but members of an innumerable confraternity of guilty ones, all shuddering at each other."

The last paragraph, which points a curious inversion of the doctrine of the communion of the saints, is characteristically Hawthornesque. It is perverse,

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but a not unnatural offshoot of Puritan meditation, and reminds one of the grotesques sometimes found on cathedral churches. It contains, intellectually, the same sort of repugnance to the idea of sin that Hilda shows emotionally in her sensitive purity. A brotherhood of sinners is surely not, necessarily, the same as a brotherhood of devils; but, without discussing the philosophy of this whim or fantasy of conscience on Miriam's part, it is enough to mark by it the depth of root that old New England thought had taken in this Arcadian soil of a long-lost Golden Age. The Puritan tone is noticeable in more than one phrase and sentiment, but in no one passage is the genuine moral nativity of the tale so plain as in this theory of the consubstantiality of guilt. It would be worthy of a capital place in ancient metaphysic dogma. Here it is only a lurid thought at a moment of intense spiritual strain; but in its most imaginative and least theologic form it defines Hawthorne's essential Puritanism and illustrates how fundamental such thought was in the workings of his imagination.

One turns happily from this nightmare of a fevered and guilty conscience to the pleasant idyl, where Donatello in his misery turns to call the dear, woodland companions of his boyhood, if, perchance, they will know his changed voice:

"'I used to make many strange acquaintances; for, from my earliest childhood, I was familiar with

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whatever creatures haunt the woods. You would have laughed to see the friends I had among them; yes, among the wild, nimble things, that reckon man their deadliest enemy! How it was first taught me, I cannot tell; but there was a charm—a voice, a murmur, a kind of chant—by which I called the woodland inhabitants, the furry people, and the feathered people, in a language that they seemed to understand.'

"'I have heard of such a gift,' responded the sculptor, gravely, 'but never before met with a person endowed with it. Pray, try the charm; and lest I should frighten your friends away, I will withdraw into this thicket, and merely peep at them.'

"'I doubt,' said Donatello, 'whether they will remember my voice now. It changes, you know, as the boy grows towards manhood.'

"Nevertheless, as the young Count's good-nature and easy persuasibility were among his best characteristics, he set about complying with Kenyon's request. The latter, in his concealment among the shrubberies, heard him send forth a sort of modulated breath, wild, rude, yet harmonious. It struck the auditor as at once the strangest and the most natural utterance that had ever reached his ears. Any idle boy, it should seem, singing to himself and setting his wordless song to no other or more definite tune than the play of his own pulses, might produce a sound almost identical with this; and yet, it was as individual as a murmur of the breeze. Dona-

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tello tried it, over and over again, with many breaks, at first, and pauses of uncertainty; then with more confidence, and a fuller swell, like a wayfarer groping out of obscurity into the light, and moving with freer footsteps as it brightens around him.

"Anon, his voice appeared to fill the air, yet not with an obtrusive clangor. The sound was of a murmurous character, soft, attractive, persuasive, friendly. The sculptor fancied that such might have been the original voice and utterance of the natural man, before the sophistication of the human intellect formed what we now call language. In this broad dialect—broad as the sympathies of nature—the human brother might have spoken to his inarticulate brotherhood that prowl the woods, or soar upon the wing, and have been intelligible to such an extent as to win their confidence.

"The sound had its pathos, too. At some of its simple cadences, the tears came quietly into Kenyon's eyes. They welled up slowly from his heart, which was thrilling with an emotion more delightful than he had often felt before, but which he forbore to analyze, lest, if he seized it, it should at once perish in his grasp.

"Donatello paused two or three times, and seemed to listen; then, recommencing, he poured his spirit and life more earnestly into the strain. And, finally, —or else the sculptor's hope and imagination deceived him,—soft treads were audible upon the fallen leaves. There was a rustling among the

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shrubbery; a whirr of wings, moreover, that hovered in the air. It may have been all an illusion; but Kenyon fancied that he could distinguish the stealthy, cat-like movement of some small forest citizen, and that he could even see its doubtful shadow, if not really its substance. But, all at once, whatever might be the reason, there ensued a hurried rush and scamper of little feet; and then the sculptor heard a wild, sorrowful cry, and through the crevices of the thicket beheld Donatello fling himself on the ground."

This is a true glimpse of the "early world." The tale is exquisitely told. The pathos of it is as natural as a catch in the throat. But the skepticism of Hawthorne toward his own imagination, which has often been commented on above, is obvious. He describes the scene; he creates the illusion; but, like a teller of stories to children, he can not refrain from the reminder that it may be all make-believe. Is matter-of-fact indeed so precious in art? Yet, for all his caution, the heart rallies to its own creations, its own illusions, it may be, and insists, for the moment, at least, on the truth of the vision. Donatello's grief that he can not call the squirrels, and other "nimble creatures,"—and every woodsman knows that there is a call which brings them near and friendly,—this grief is a fable of the rift that conscience discloses between innocence and experience; something is lost with the passing years be-

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side "the splendor in the grass" and "the glory in the flower;" and it is this inner and mystic loss, this bereavement, as it were, that is shadowed forth in Donatello's cry. Fanciful as the scene and the incident may seem to some, in its essence the myth, if myth it be, rings true to the heart of all. If the faun in Donatello received his death-wound in the murder scene, it was here in the wood that he died. Here the "early world" passed out of Donatello's life, as it passes out of the life of all men whom life matures; and the truth is well enough set forth imaginatively by this simple and beautiful Arcadian fable of Donatello's call.

The visible charm and romantic emotion—what one may call the literary fascination—of these three passages, is obvious. Hawthorne was at the height of his power of representation and grace of description when he penned them. The golden and mellow glow, as of an American autumn, that pervades Irving's ripe literary years and often transforms Hawthorne's style into a sort of dreamland of the imagination, rests like a haze on Monte Beni and its shadowy valleys leading down to Rome. The perfection of it, as the woof of imaginative feeling and verbal art, is undeniable; and the flash of Italian landscapes and scenes completes the spell. But, ethically, to keep attention fixed on the moral tale involved in this picturesque web of material fact, artistic tradition and spiritual speculation, the final impression is of mystery. Mystery is, indeed, a per-

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manent element in Hawthorne's mood of thought, and sometimes it degenerates into the merely uncertain, the unexplained or the fanciful. This lower form of mystery occurs in the romance repeatedly; it is plain enough in the untold story of Miriam and the model and in the untold after-life of Miriam and Donatello, neither of which seems logically connected with the plot, though linked with it temporarily; there are always things left thus in the penumbra of life or stories. But the mystery, which is impressed on the mind, in the moral conduct of the tale in its essence, is the age-old mystery of evil in the world and its contact, by chance or fate, with innocent lives, together with its results in the destinies and the nature of its victims. This was a problem of native attraction to the New England romancer; he had changed his climate, but not his mind. He assumed the state of innocence or of nature, which he made identical, and he brought that world in contact with evil in the form of a crime which he interpreted as sin; and he undertook to tell the reactions that took place in the persons concerned. He dealt with an artificial world, in both instances, and dreamed his dream with such aid as speculation could give him. Perhaps there was more poetic fantasy than moral reality in his meditation; but, however that may be, it is not for any light he throws on the divine mystery of the soul's life that one reads the tale.

It must be acknowledged that, for all its adven-

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tures into the spiritual realm, the novel has made its way mostly, certainly in later years, as a tourist's companion, or better kind of guide-book, to give feeling and perspective to the ramblings of foreigners in the hill country of Italy and to make "a Roman holiday." Its vivid presentation of the scene and background, as a mere book of travel, with its myriad almost photographic touches, recommend it to the eye that looks on Italy for the first time, and with a sight half of memory of what has been told and expectation of what shall be, as well as of actuality. It fulfills the early dream and prepares for the greater vision. Hawthorne was so uncommonly good a sight-seer and narrator, and also a bit of a visionary, that his description of Italian scenes, where he always had subjects equal to his powers, is a masterpiece of realism with the unseen light in it. His artistic predilections and associations, also, which brought him, both temperamentally and socially, into sympathy with paintings and statues and gardens, however amateurish and initiatory his comments and enthusiasms may seem to a more sophisticated generation, enabled him to give an appearance of wholeness to his rendering of Italian life, as a tourist sees it. He included in his imaginative survey of the land an uncommon amount and variety of mere information,—sights, objects, aspects, customs and persons, the medley of the world of foreign travel; and this gives another interest to the tale, quite separate from that of the spiritual

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story involved. What history is to the ordinary historical novel, that travel is to this romance. In particular, the talk, if it may be so designated, about the Roman sights, the Church of the Capuchins, the portrait of the Cenci, the painting of St. Michael, and the confessional and the carnival, is interesting, wholly apart from Donatello and the pitiful history of his inner life and tragic fortune. In so picturesque a world, with such manifold and fascinating vistas and horizons of time, myth and natural beauty, it seems to matter little what takes place; the scene more than the action absorbs attention; it is Rome, not Donatello, that holds the eye.

This over-balance of the surroundings and atmosphere of the story, in comparison with its human narrative, is evident. The tale is read for its accidents, so to speak, rather than for its substance. Yet, without regard to the spiritual history of Donatello, the characters are more interesting, personally, than is common with Hawthorne, sharper and more massive. Ordinarily, there is something thin and fragile, unsubstantial, in the sense his characters give of themselves,—a water-color effect, as it were; Miriam, Donatello, Hilda,—and, somewhat removed, Kenyon—seem like a marble group. Perhaps, the name—*The Marble Faun*—is partly responsible for this impression,—the name and the thing; but, besides, there is a certain immobility in the figures,—they seem always posed. Even, when most in action, as in the sylvan dance and the un-

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easy movement after the murder, they recall the motion of bas-reliefs more than the freedom of life. The continuous artistic effect, as of posing, results from the fewness of the characters, which are always identical and in simple relations, and their singleness is only the more emphasized, when they are seen against larger and nameless groups, as in the sylvan dance, with the strollers of the murder-scene, or in the square at Perugia beneath the bronze pontiff's benediction.

There is great definiteness of outline to the four characters; and yet, it is singular how little one knows about them. Miriam is like a visitor from another world, without origin or destiny. She is, from her entrance, infinitely more mature than Donatello and she continues to give this impression of a being out of his sphere, even to the end, by virtue of her experience; their partnership in crime does not really unite them as equal mates. She was, from the first, a woman, and he was a boy, to whom experience came as a catastrophe and with illumination, no doubt; but he remained a boy at heart, however saddened and wise, with the dark mortal knowledge. It is a trait of Hawthorne's work in creation that his characters show little substantial change in nature, however much their situations alter. Are not the characters of *The Scarlet Letter* essentially the same at the close as at the beginning of the tale? Their experience has passed over them, and changed the circumstances, but are they changed

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in any distinguishable way, except that they are older in the lore of life? Miriam belongs to a specific and peculiar type of womanhood, that Hawthorne repeatedly tried to present,—the same type as Hester and Zenobia. A richer nature, a more massive physique, that something "oriental," as it is described, characterized these women in general, and set them over against the normal New England type, delicate, fragile, paler, which Hilda, Priscilla, and the unnamed frail woman of the crowd in the Puritan romance reflected. The line between the two types is almost racial, so definite is the contrast of opposites; or, if not quite opposites, then aliens.

It is singular to observe that the stronger, richer, more generous physical type seems the more human. Hilda, though set forth as the very apotheosis of the virginal, there in the tower with her doves, and again in her instinctive revolt at the mere knowledge of evil, and her refusal of it, in the incident of the confessional, where she freed herself from the pollution and dismay that the knowledge had been to her,—Hilda, with all her sensitiveness to the shock within her own nature, shows a hardness of virtue that reminds the reader of the "unco' guid." Would she, under any circumstances, have been capable of seeing Donatello with Miriam's eyes? As little as of winning his love, one thinks. The two women are poles apart. Whence came Hawthorne's breadth of view, and especially this continually reappearing woman of the stronger and richer, and, one must add, more

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unrestrained nature? Knowledge of the realities of life was with them, more than with their paler sisters, he seems to say. In *The Marble Faun,* at least, true knowledge was with Miriam and Donatello, however much the conventional counsel of Kenyon, at his leave-taking to go to the rescue of Hilda, might look like wisdom, and, indeed, an elevated form of it. Kenyon, indeed, is colorless, a mere mouthpiece to fill out the play.

Hawthorne's success, as is readily seen, is usually greater with his female than with his male characters. Neither Arther Dimmesdale nor Roger Chillingworth is really interesting, and toward Hollingsworth one feels social repugnance. Donatello is a bright exception to the somewhat heavy villains of the Hawthornesque stage. He is, in fact, a lovable creature, and fitted to his Arcadian environment like a beautiful animal to the woods and pastures, but his fascination is wholly human; kind, gentle, joyous, a devoted lover with the light spirits of youth, it was ill fortune for him when the shadows of Rome and of life fell across his native sunshine. His crime is so swiftly accomplished, so vaguely motived, so unreflecting, that it does not alienate him, in the least, from the natural affection which he has already elicited from the reader. It is hard to believe that it is a real crime that has been seen, and not a mere nightmare of fancy. The crime is not sufficiently rooted in evil to have the effect attributed to it, one thinks, in remorse and in

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revelation of the spiritual nature. It is here that the abstract element in Hawthorne's imagined situation fails to carry conviction. It may be admitted in theory that out of experience of sin a soul may come to self-consciousness, and in that sense be born, but it is not plain that Donatello's wild act was of a sort to serve as a true type of sin; and in abstract art conviction of the universality of the instance given must be perfect. Casuistry has too large a field in this case. Still less satisfactory is the account of his remorse, repentance and absolution, if such there were. The history of the crime and its spiritual consequences is too fragmentary, too slightly made out and defined, to make the "transformation" of Donatello much more than a form of words. He remains, in his alleged transformation, much the same in nature as before, so far as visible signs go, except it is a lovable nature seen in shadow instead of in light. He has not forfeited good-will. One is sorry for what has befallen him, but with the pity that one feels for suffering that is not understood by its victim, and with sympathy that abides in the memory. This is not the story of a new fall of man, nor anything like it; nor is it a new gospel of that fall; it is a tale, on the contrary, not very well made out, so far as it lies in the spiritual realm of the history of the soul's birth and pilgrimage.

But the case is far different with the earthly scene and circumstances of the story. One almost calls it

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a myth, because it has so lovely an investiture for its moral doctrines, and lies so near, on the one hand, to the tradition of the Golden Age, and, on the other, to Roman classical remains. It has been much used in Italy by the transient resident or traveler, because of its sympathetic and contemplative description of places and things. It rivals *Childe Harold,* which is now old-fashioned, for such use, and it is much more practical. *Corinne* and Stendhal are quite out of date. *The Marble Faun* is a work of the same utility as these for a more modern and differently bred traveler than the gentlemen of a century ago. It contains an introduction to the visible land; and it prepares the mind, as well as the eye, for the scene. Its function has been even wider and perhaps of greater value as an element in American culture, to the untraveled, inasmuch as it has spread before them a vision of "delectable mountains" they may never traverse, and embodied for them the Italian dream. Hawthorne had both the seeing and the dreaming eye, and both are needful for the sight of Italy. Through his pellucid narrative there runs the mirage, charm mixes with reality on his page, there is the same uncertainty whether this is life or dream, that his work not infrequently gives; and this fits the Italian scene. The landscape and persons of his story, as he builds them up imaginatively, have something of the character of an emanation rather than of real substance, that something diaphanous characteristic of the imagi-

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nary in New England at that time, not quite phantasmal and not quite flesh and blood. The imaginary Italian scene, both in its figures and its look, in Hawthorne's tale, is, really, mythical, to describe it most appropriately; and it is in the atmosphere of that world that he presents the realities of the land, its squares and churches and crowds, its pictures and statues. So admirably has he thrown this air about all he touches that scarce any romance seems so timeless. Donatello, by his very conception, puts time to flight, and the Italy against which his figure is relieved is eternal Italy. It is this Italy, where myths seem real, that Hawthorne brought home to his countrymen's apprehension.

It is obvious how near this romance was, by its realism, to the actual scene, and, by its idealism, to art, and thus doubly to Italy. It had the easy particularism of the one and the universality of the other. In both ways it succeeded, as a book of travel and as an idealization of an idyllic world, prehuman in spirit, evolving into the sad world of universal experience, the human world; only, in this second phase, the Puritanic elements in the transformation—elements of hereditary thought in Hawthorne—fail to carry conviction of their reality. To speak in the language of the schools, there is no true "katharsis," that is, no manifest purification and elimination of the sorrowful evil that had befallen, no absolution, but the characters are left struggling in the coil that had involved them, with

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a rather sternly expressed charge that they endure their fate in a penitential mood. The Puritan solution does not end the tragedy; that is the fault. It follows naturally, for the human heart is sound, that the preferred parts of the story are the travel scenes and the myth of Donatello in the days of his golden youth,—the Italian parts. The tragedy itself belongs to the thought and temper of a sterner and darker land,—that old New England, out of which Hawthorne's genius was originally taken, like some great gray boulder of that soil, which, despite its weight of wood-flowers and ferns and occasional sun-gleams under the pines, shadows the hillside.

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CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

IT was Hawthorne's pleasant but somewhat futile habit to wind up his novels with a short chapter, in which, before dismissing his characters to their unrecorded fates, he vaguely indicated their various fortunes in the great world. It would be similarly pleasant, but equally futile, no doubt, for the critic to attempt to gather the wandering strands of his comment on such a miscellany as Hawthorne's works constitute, and so set forth some outline sketch, at least, of as eminent a genius as American annals contain, before bidding him farewell. A genius, however, like his books, has fates of his own that no criticism can much deflect, even for the period of current taste. It is to be suspected that, even at the present time, Hawthorne has ceased to be judged by the standards of contemporary popular taste and is most valued for that appeal his writings in general make to a communal regard and affection for the things, the ways and the people of the old time. He embodies the age he lived in and many memories of the "times before," and this is his hold—to a certain extent a sentimental hold—on the generation that succeeded him, and is now passing. On the other hand, he is hardly yet come to be

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judged by the canons of pure taste and timeless art which finally decide a nation's classics; in any case, when established, they appeal to but a few in each age, though they are long-lived; true fame is the breath of long-past time. It is plain, however, that he was one of the greater writers of his own age; and it is as a writer of his age, a contemporary writer, that he has been viewed in this volume.

The contemporaneous element in his writings, both in their subject-matter and their feeling, is so large as almost to place him, at first sight, among provincial authors, whose fame lies in the success with which they describe and present the life of their own locality. Each section of the older parts of the country had its native romancer to celebrate the scenes and historic episodes of the soil; and, with the course of time, the newer parts have given rise to fiction or poetry with the tang of their own earth. The Creoles, the Argonauts, the Hoosiers, have each a historian of manners, if not a Homer. The strongly marked and picturesque characteristics of the early settlements over all the continent are thus preserved in literary beginnings. A literature, close to the soil, whose pride it is to be strictly limited to "the business and bosoms" of its own people, is often highly extolled; in late years it has been a mere incident of nationalist movements; and, if those who maintain in literature the separatist principle of nationality are right, then the provincialism that Hawthorne, at first sight, displays is

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only a badge of genius and proclaims him a true master. Boston has often been compared, as respects its literary status, to Edinburgh. Under the theory which has been mentioned, New England literature would be, in regard to English, a colonial product, of marked vigor and interesting traits, but set off by itself and to be appreciated mainly by its own folk.

The first impression given by Hawthorne's work in general is, no doubt, of its strong local character. It not only presents the local scene, but it smacks of the soil in thought and sentiment. Its New Englandism is a matter, too, of the history it enshrines, and the idealism it illustrates. The whole literature of the northeastern coast, however, in respect to that of the rest of the country, gains distinction by its comparative remoteness in time, and especially because, in consequence of its early date, it neighbored the main stream of English letters, and drew from that great tradition; the mellow accent of the eighteenth century fell golden from its lips in the new world. It was not merely graces of verbal style that it remembered and absorbed; there was a style of thought, as well as of words, in Goldsmith and his comrades and elders that had not yet found oblivion when the first native authors and their immediate successors began to write. It was this afterglow of a great classical age in the colonial sky which most distinguished the acknowledged American masters of the earlier part of the nineteenth century

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from later pioneers of literature in the country at large. Hawthorne was one of those who profited most by the olden tradition, and most continued it. He had from it his literary descent and breeding. The old English culture which he absorbed in literary tradition, however remote from its old home, added something to the local character of his work, which differentiated it and gave it larger citizenship in the world. The presence of this is most obvious, perhaps, in his style.

Hawthorne's style has been much commented on. It is not capable of any simple analysis, for it involves much more than the mere graces of expression, and, indeed, flows rather from that style of thought which has just been mentioned as an inward thing above expression. This is no more, perhaps, than to say, as of old, "the style is the man." Such style as Hawthorne's has nothing rhetorical about it; it is a grace of character. What is dwelt on here more particularly, however, is that, if by his birth he shared something communal with his society, and was by virtue of that a provincial author, he also by his genius shared in the great tradition of English literature,—that tradition of serious character, sweet speech and a certain elevation of tone, that harmonized well with his Puritan blood and made him a great master of the English tongue. This literary breeding was, indeed, the common culture of his time; but he appropriated it with a sympathetic genius of such power as to distinguish his work

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above others for those excellencies which were most valued in that culture. The conspicuous quality of his style is a wonderful purity of tone. It is the dominance of this, together with the constant presence of the imaginative world, that establishes his characteristic atmosphere; no American writer works so habitually in the artistic element. His page is broken by an occasional freak of humor or fancy; it is full of kindly feeling, of a certain neighborliness of mind; for all its gloom, sunshine lies warm on it, and friendliness pervades it. But, apart from any human quality, the style is the still and pellucid atmosphere through which his scenes are beheld, as with all the masters of English.

Heredity was strong in Hawthorne, as it is generally observed to be in men of literary genius; but it would be misleading to think of his inheritance as narrowly local, a matter of village things; it was also broadly intellectual, the patrimony of his people. He drew his subject and his spirit from the land—and, indeed, one may say, from the province—of his birth; but his art—the real home of his genius—was more universal. In like fashion, too, the conception of his realism, a primary trait in his earlier work and a distinguished feature of his novels, should be enlarged. With that keen observation, habitual with him from the beginning, he saw the object, whatever it was, clearly, and represented exactly even its minute and transitory aspects; but he saw it, as he saw history also, en-

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swathed in sentiment. The case is somewhat like that of realism in the pastoral, where facts are seen plainly and often with a minuteness that seems trifling, but through a medium of artistic feeling. It is realism, as it were, at one remove. So Hawthorne saw the native landscape—rocks and woods and sea and the things of the farm and road—realistically indeed, but with a certain home-feeling, instinctive and unconscious in him, yet characteristic of his people and his race,—saw it through the sentiment of home; the habit, which was to him as his natural breath, has, to a later generation, something almost reminiscent in it; and the home-sentiment, which it originally embodied, becomes, especially to those who have long left the land, the sentiment for the past. One can hardly overestimate this element in Hawthorne's fascination.

The manner of his approach to local history, whether in its actual or imaginative form, is similar. It is not the mere historical fact that he presents, as an annalist might do, or any writer interested only in the specific truth; but he shows it, as he sees it himself, through the sentiment of patriotism. This is conspicuous in some of the colonial tales. The home-sentiment under some form of local pride is pervasive in his work. It is as fundamental in the novels, though under a different phase, as in the legends of the early champions of New England liberty. It is through the strength of this element in his fiction, especially, that he came to be the imaginative

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historian of the original New England folk and the Puritanism in which their communal life was concentrated. In his novels he set forth the spirit of his people, his "little clan"; no one but a son of the soil could have done it as he did it, viewing imaginatively their historic life, just as he looked on their familiar fields and pastures, through a sentiment born of his nativity. It was this sentiment which gave antique charm to *The House of the Seven Gables,* religious intensity to *The Scarlet Letter* and moral meaning to *The Marble Faun.* Underlying each of these novels was a communal inheritance, a historic unity of instinct, feeling and experience. They were not mere inventions of an idle day, but in them Hawthorne gave voice to the greatest realities his people had found. What had begun with him as local history ended as ideal romance; but the basis and origin of all alike lay in his original attachment to his own soil, a profound New England feeling, an instinct, he himself calls it, another form, in fact, of the sentiment of home, but with power upon a whole people instead of an individual. It was the fulness with which he expressed and obeyed this sentiment, both in his choice of subject and his method of treatment, that made him the most representative writer of New England. He showed it forth, not only as a land, but as a people.

Such modifications by the sentiment of home and country as give emotional value to landscape and history are initiatory stages to the pure illusions of

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art; they are a part of the process of making an artist. The bare fact becomes malleable and changes in significance. An emotional treatment of landscape, an imaginative and especially a dramatic treatment of history are common, and it is understood that they recreate their object. It has been advised, indeed, on the highest authority of the schools, that history should be so adapted to the imagination on the score of the economy of invention thus obtained, both in conception and feeling. It was Shakespeare's method in many of his plays. It is usually essential to success, however, that in a drama history should be very ductile,—indeed, preferably a myth. The advantage to Hawthorne in using Puritanism as a background is obvious, in that he easily secured attention. The same gain is generally aimed at in the historical novel of any period. It belongs to the historical novel that it should have solid fact for its substance and attract the reader by this circumstance as well as for other reasons. It may well be doubted, however, in view of the career of that type of novel in the last century, whether history is, in any high degree, a preservative element in literature. Even in the capital case of Sir Walter Scott, the unrivaled master of historical fiction, the permanent hold of his books on the world, outside Scotland, is matter of speculation. The historical substance is local and temporal, —essentially mortal; it is a weight that the imaginative and purely literary qualities of the book must

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carry in the race with time. Such novels will retain their interest so long as the history they embody is interesting either to the nation described or to the world; later, in proportion as they are exact renderings of the customs and atmosphere of the times they represent, they will be consulted and read mainly by persons of an antiquarian habit. Puritanism, the historical element in Hawthorne's work, will long preserve it in his own land, as being a past phase of a land proud and reminiscent of its past; but for preservation in the larger world, his work must depend on something more than its historical appeal.

To turn again to the case of pastoral poetry and its treatment of landscape and human life, it sees the real, as was said above, at one remove, as it were, through a special atmosphere, as Hawthorne saw his native New England, whether land or people, through a sentiment. The pastoral, to put it briefly, sees the world through the universal elements of beauty and of love with which it surrounds and fills the scene. What it sees is, therefore, for the eyes of all the world, beauty and love being universal principles. Hawthorne, as his genius matured, seized on the universal moral principle, and saw human life and destiny in the world through that. His Puritan origin led him to mark mainly the shadows in the scene,—that is, the operation of evil rather than good; this accounts for the predominant impression of gloom one receives

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from his work, though in fact there is abundant sunshine in it. The main hues, however, are tragic, pessimistic, hopeless. In so far as evil and its problems are a universal aspect of life, his work makes a universal appeal. He thus exceeds his province by virtue of his moral subject; but he treats his subject with genius, and it is not the subject but the genius that makes him great. He treated it under the pure illusions of art.

The type of pure illusion in imaginative art is the Shakespearean ideal drama. Here reality, in the sense of the local and temporal, is refined away; the scene involves no special time or place or persons. It is a great feat for the imagination to spare such aid. Imagination was Hawthorne's prime faculty; but it freed its wings slowly for a long flight. *The House of the Seven Gables* is always near to Salem; but *The Scarlet Letter* is far less provincial than it seems, and *The Marble Faun* at times seems to forget its New England origin. *The Scarlet Letter* is not only an episode of Puritanism, it is universal tragedy; and *The Marble Faun* is half a pastoral, and all in an ideal land of its own. The quality of Hawthorne's imagination is hardly appreciated. He was a master of pure illusion, and held a magician's wand that commanded the regions "out of space, out of time," with uncommon power. No other American foot has entered the charmed circle where Donatello appeared. Indeed, as has been indicated, Hawthorne could scarcely believe

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his own magic. Again and again he questions the workings of his own imagination, as if he were possessed by a questioning spirit, a Mephistopheles of the modern mind. "Did the scarlet letter burn in the sky?" is a typical query; but, believe the portent or not, the dreaming faculty—the creative instinct having its will—went on, and again with the wizard's curse, and again with Donatello in the wood. Genius, like love, "finds out its way." Hawthorne approached art through those universal principles that underlie it—characteristically, the moral principle,—whose issue is the tragic; but his imagination was also master of gentler spells.

In the work of genius of so high a quality and so pure an action, it is natural to observe more closely its particular operation in its several tasks, in those points of execution commonly examined in the case of great genius. There is generally more of growth than of deliberate intention in such works. Plots, in creation, it is to be suspected, are apt to find their own climaxes; but it is interesting to see where they occur and to notice their effect, both in the action and on the author. *The Scarlet Letter* reaches its climax in the apparition of the letter in the sky, if it may be so described; in *The House of the Seven Gables* the point where the story turns is the incident of the judge's death, and in *The Marble Faun* the critical event is the murder. In each case the tragic reversal occurs at the place mentioned, in the emblazonment in the sky of the minister's se-

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cret sin, in the fulfillment of the ancestral curse in its last instance, and in Donatello's change of nature. There is a sub-plot, also, in the plan for escape in the first, and in the story of Alice and the myth of the nymph in the other two cases; but it is feeble and negligible, the plan being abortive and the two brief legends mere reduplications of the main idea. The climax, or reversal, is followed by an explanatory incident, emphasizing what has occurred, in the public confession of the minister and in Donatello's grief in the wood, when the wild creatures do not answer to his call; and the flight of the brother and sister from the old house is, essentially, the first step in the dissolution of the curse and the freeing of the plot. It is noticeable that, in all these cases, the climax with its single pendant incident is the virtual end of the main story; after it occurs the later fates of Hawthorne's characters do not interest him; this is true even in Donatello's case, for he ceases to be prominent after the scene in the wood, and, in fact, drops out of the tale, except as a flitting figure. This, in the main, is because Hawthorne was interested in the idea and not in the persons of the particular tale. The quality of human sympathy, however, is strongly evident in the romance of old Salem, and what may be called creative sympathy—the sympathy of an author for his own creations—is manifest especially in the Roman tale.

It is plain that Hawthorne's interest did not lie in the logical development of a single action, the true

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strength of plot. It was not dramatic interest except incidentally; primarily, it was psychological, —an interest, not in action, but in states of mind, and, particularly, the recoil of action on the mind. This is normally a state of suffering, and a basis of tragic emotion. It is a fascinating field for the psychologist with a dramatic instinct. It lends itself more readily to scenes, phases, indirect expression, repetition and meditation than the straightforward evolution of a single action would allow; and, as a matter of fact, Hawthorne does not so much develop an action as illustrate an idea. His method in doing this is most characteristically described as mosaic-work. He gathers together his materials from various quarters and combines them into a harmonious and brilliant composite that makes his romance a succession of scenes only loosely connected. In a novel this is not so injurious as it would be in a drama; for the end of a dramatist is to portray an action, but a novelist has many ends. Hawthorne's purpose was to portray human nature under various aspects,—mainly of suffering; and he set it forth, not primarily through the acts, but through the mental moods of his characters. But, when all allowance has been made for the psychological interest and eclectic method of Hawthorne, close analysis undoubtedly leaves the conviction that his work is structurally weak in its greater examples.

The impression of some lack of structural vigor in Hawthorne's genius is confirmed, if one looks at

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the history of his artistic method. His early use of the physical object as a symbol has been sufficiently described. It served him well, and its development in his practise is interesting; but he exhausted it in *The Scarlet Letter,* and in *The Marble Faun* he was obliged to break it up, so to speak, and distribute its function among several objects. Symbolism of this sort properly issues in mysticism as a habit of thought; but Hawthorne was not a mystic. On the contrary, he shared the temperament of his age of reform and was skeptical in his mental mood. The miscellaneous matter and eclectic habit of his imagination are best illustrated by the group of his unfinished posthumous tales, where he had not yet coordinated and harmonized the various elements into one narrative. It would seem that his long practise in the short story had so habituated him to its restrictions and its opportunities that he did not fully gain the larger freedom of the longer form; his romances tend to be a series of scenic tableaux, each singly impressive, and in them he is in other ways frequently reminiscent of his early manner. In other words, he never developed an artistic method so appropriate to the romance as the symbolism of the physical image was to the brief tale of imagination.

But despite what critical deductions may be made on the score of structure and method as applied in the novels, Hawthorne's conspicuous excellencies are richly illustrated in their progress, and charac-

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terize the longer works more brilliantly than they do the tales where they appear on a smaller scale. Designs on a small scale, indeed, favored the qualities of his genius in some ways; but these brief and condensed scenes were more effective when grouped than when taken singly. The vividness and vigor, the harmony of the elements, the exquisite finish, are characteristic of the patient artist trained in detail,—in just that elaboration that a limited surface requires. What has been described, in his early work, as a taste for theatrical action, the set scene, which he derived from Scott, remained with him throughout. A writer with such a discipline and taste, developed and fixed by long practise in the short story, naturally falls into an agglomerative method of construction, when he attempts a greater task. The virtues of his school, however, remain with him. Hawthorne's hand lost none of its cunning, in the passage from the tale to the romance. He owns the same brilliant effects of gloom and sunshine, of mystery, fantasy and myth, but now they are massed. This is the characteristic difference between his earlier and later manhood, with the addition in his full maturity of a greater depth in meditation and a fuller illusion in his visionary power.

It is this illusion, the last triumph of imagination, which most characterizes and crowns Hawthorne's genius. It is the air that is the breath of ideal creations and spreads over the landscape of all works of

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imaginative genius with a scenic effect, as in a picture or a theater, that mocks reality, so more essentially real does it seem than fact. Poetic illusion is its climax; Shakespearean illusion is its dramatic form; but it always emanates from the ideal and fills its world. Hawthorne's works are full of it; and this is best indicated by the emphasis which has been constantly placed here on the artistic quality in his genius. This is what gives him his charm, as his moral quality gives him his substance. At the end these three traits stand out, characterizing him: he was a New Englander, representative of the land and the historic people; he was an artist, who filled his somewhat abstract world with a magic of reality, while he wrought with exquisite detail in ideal elements; he was a moralist who made his art the vehicle of thought upon the profoundest mysteries of human fate. In the first phase he is dear to his own people; but it is by the last two that he makes a universal appeal.

THE END

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